CHRONOCLE

KAZUMASA TAKAYAMA

DARK HORSE COMICS

Manga

CHRONOWAR
3 OF 9

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CHROMEWAR

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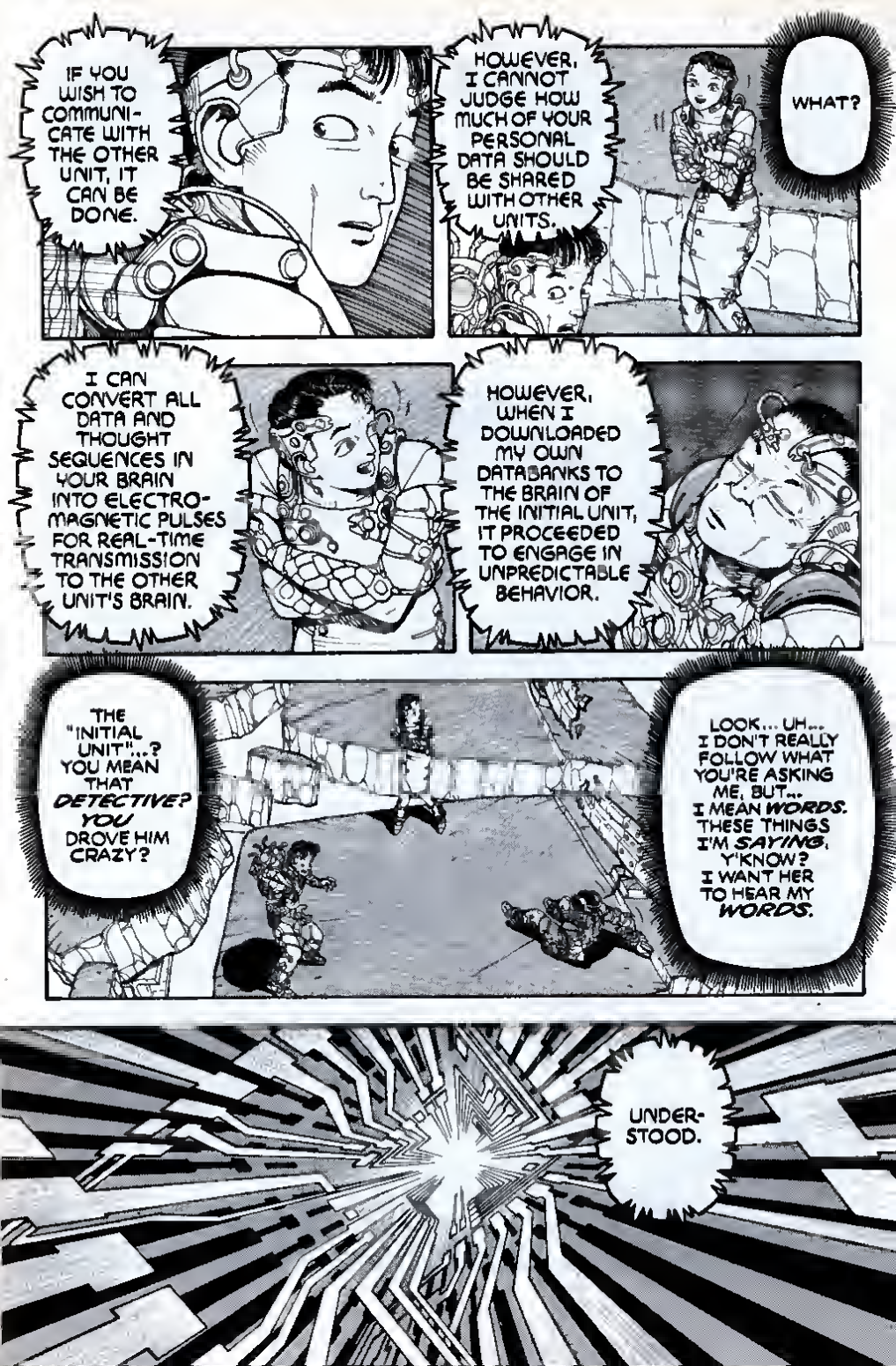
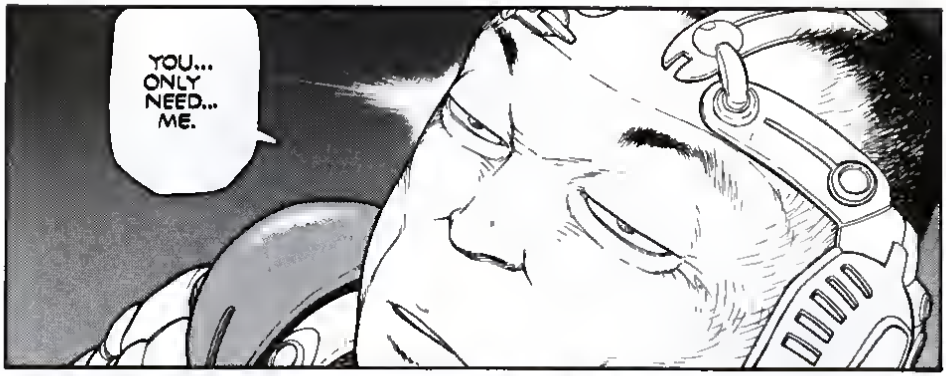
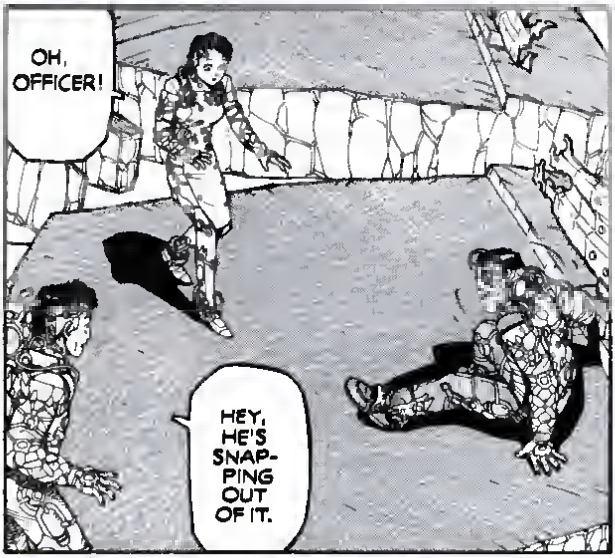
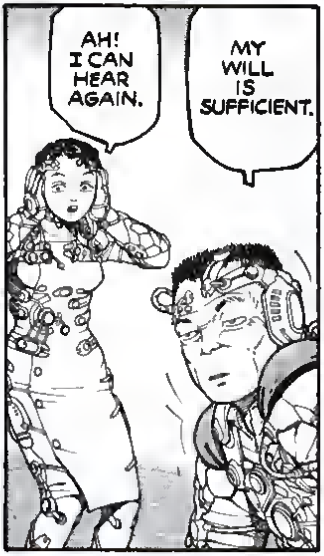
YOU AND THE OTHER UNITS I HAVE CONTACTED USE DIFFERENCES IN ION CHARGES TRANSPORTED OVER ORGANIC CIRCUITRY TO CARRY DATA SIGNALS BETWEEN YOUR CPU AND YOUR PERIPHERAL SENSORS.
WHAT? I DON'T--
MY PRIMARY INTERFACE USES LIGHT AND ELECTRICAL IMPULSES. MY INFORMATION PROCESSING CAPACITY PER TIME UNIT IS APPROXIMATELY ONE-HUNDRED THOUSAND TIMES GREATER THAN THAT OF YOUR ORGANIC NEURAL NET.
IN ORDER TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU, I HAVE ANALYZED YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS AND SPLICED MY OWN COMMUNICATION LINKS INTO YOUR NET. I HAVE REDIRECTED ALL YOUR INTERNAL DATA TRAFFIC THROUGH THESE NEW BYPASS CIRCUITS.
WH... WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

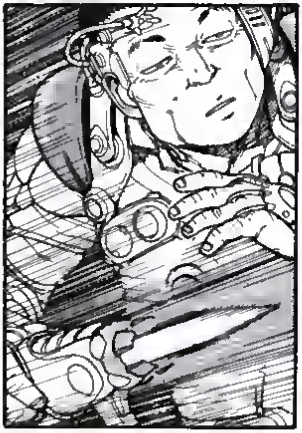
YOU ARE UNAWARE OF HOW YOUR BODY CASING FUNCTIONS?
OH, GOD... I MUST BE LOSING MY MIND!
HEY, YOU BETTER STAY AWAY FROM HIM! HE'S BEEN ACTING REALLY STRANGE--
HUH?!
NO, WAIT! I WON'T HURT YOU, HONEST!
WHAT?! LOOK, I CAN'T HEAR YOU, EITHER.

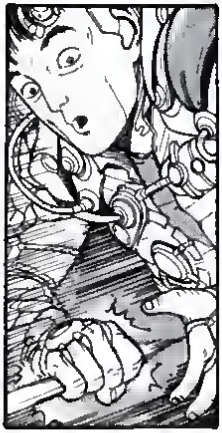

IF YOU WISH TO COMMUNI-CATE WITH THE OTHER UNIT, IT CAN BE DONE.
HOWEVER, I CANNOT JUDGE HOW MUCH OF YOUR PERSONAL DATA SHOULD BE SHARED WITH OTHER UNITS.
WHAT?
I CAN CONVERT ALL DATA AND THOUGHT SEQUENCES IN YOUR BRAIN INTO ELECTRO-MAGNETIC PULSES FOR REAL-TIME TRANSMISSION TO THE OTHER UNIT'S BRAIN.
HOWEVER, WHEN I DOWNLOADED MY OWN DATABANKS TO THE BRAIN OF THE INITIAL UNIT, IT PROCEEDED TO ENGAGE IN UNPREDICTABLE BEHAVIOR.
THE "INITIAL UNIT"...? YOU MEAN THAT *DETECTIVE?* *YOU* DROVE HIM CRAZY?
LOOK... UH... I DON'T REALLY FOLLOW WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME, BUT... I MEAN *WORDS.* THESE THINGS I'M *SAYING*, Y'KNOW? I WANT HER TO HEAR MY *WORDS.*
UNDER-STOOD.

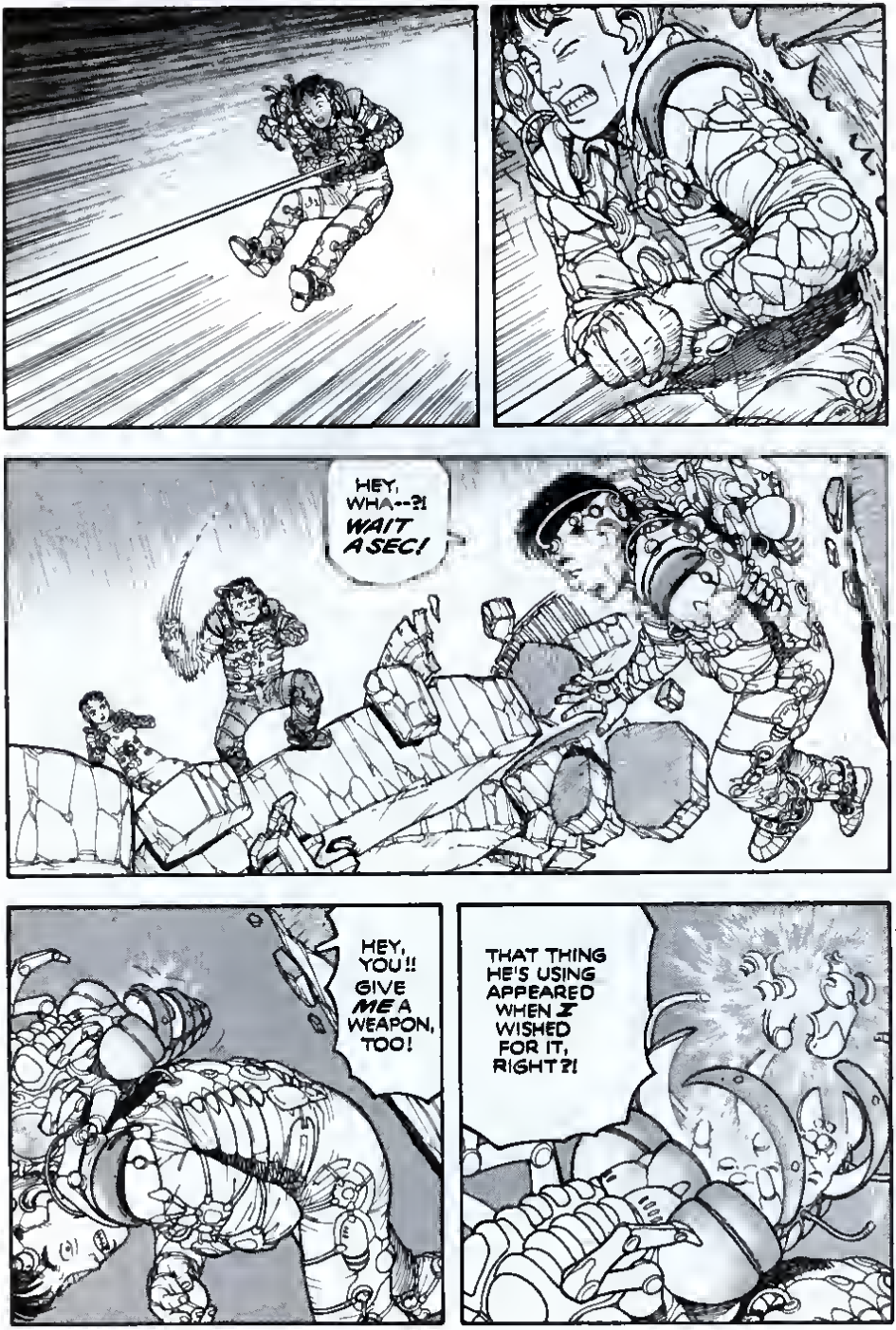

YOU... ONLY NEED... ME.

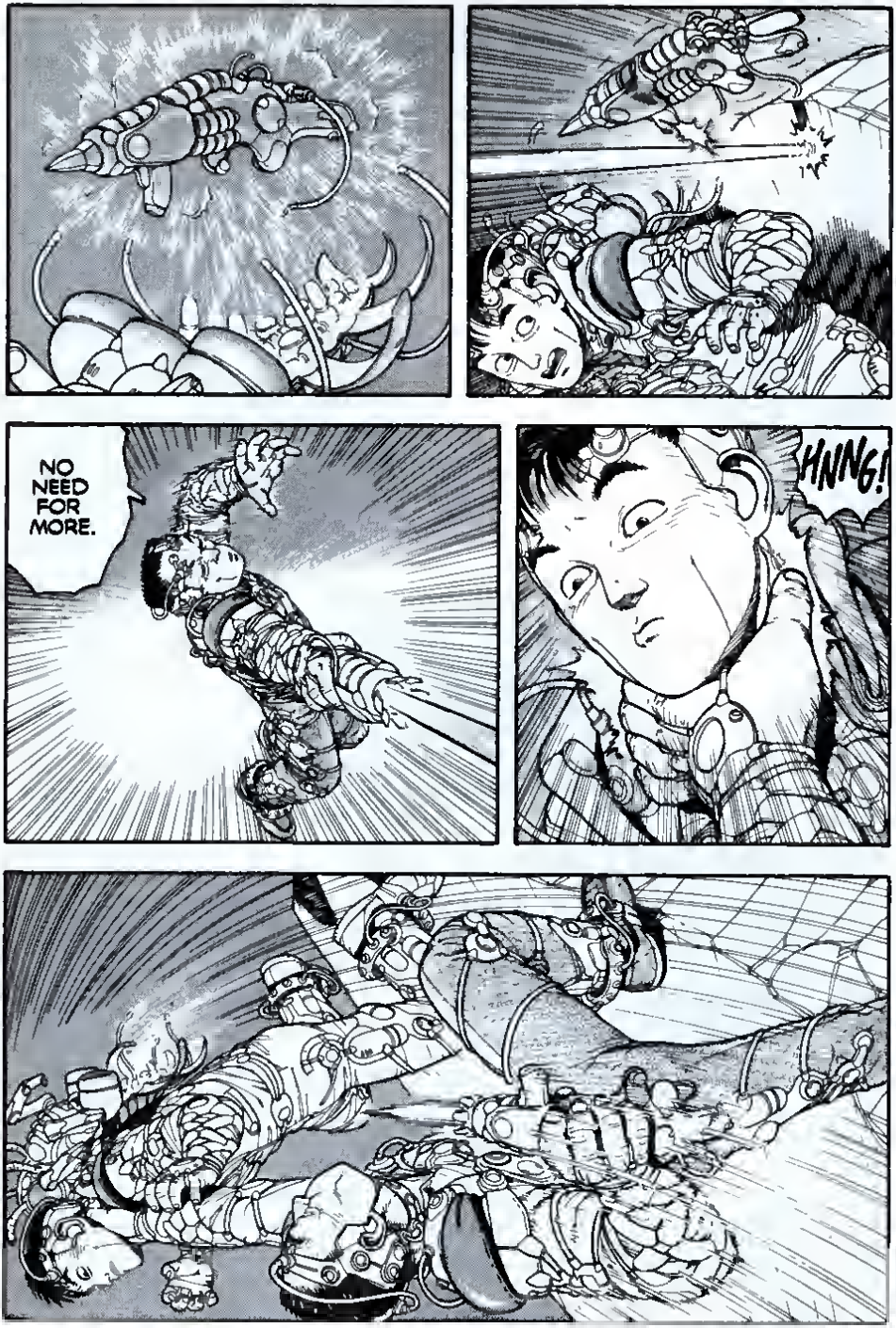

OH, OFFICER!
HEY, HE'S SNAP-PING OUT OF IT.

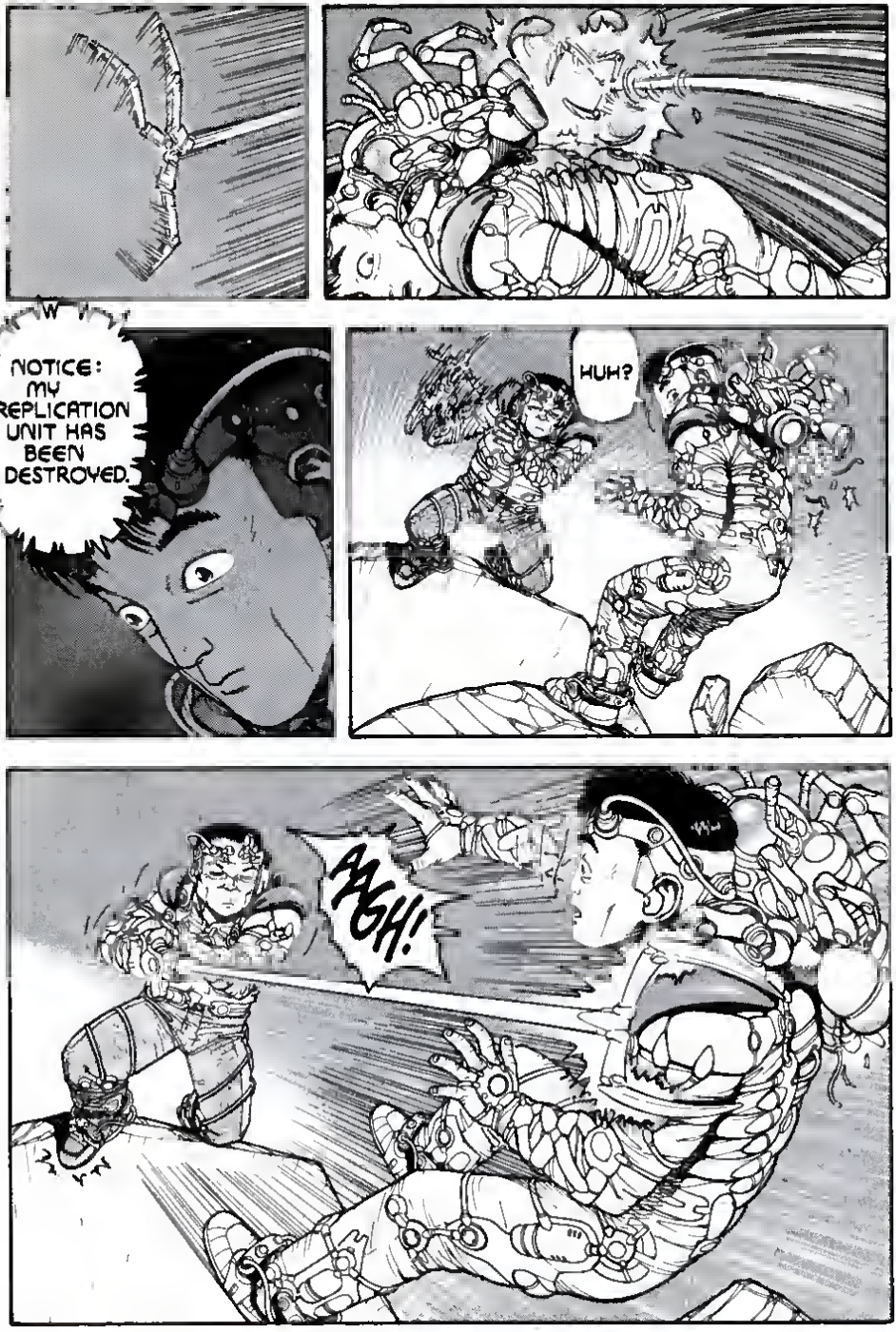

AH! I CAN HEAR AGAIN.
MY WILL IS SUFFICIENT.

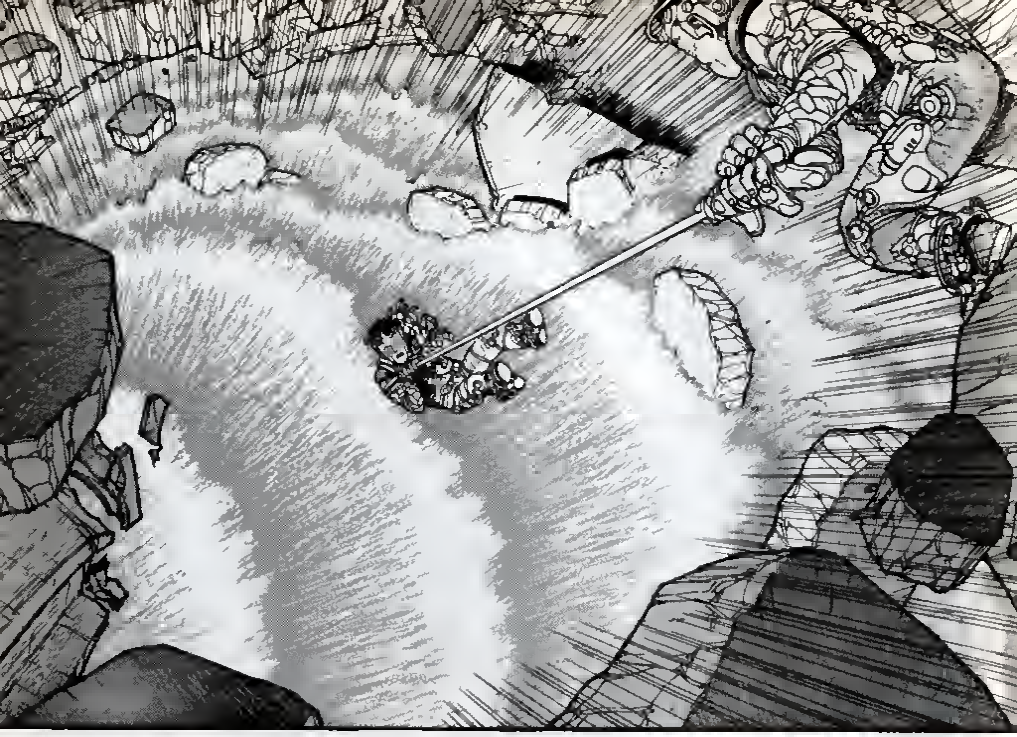


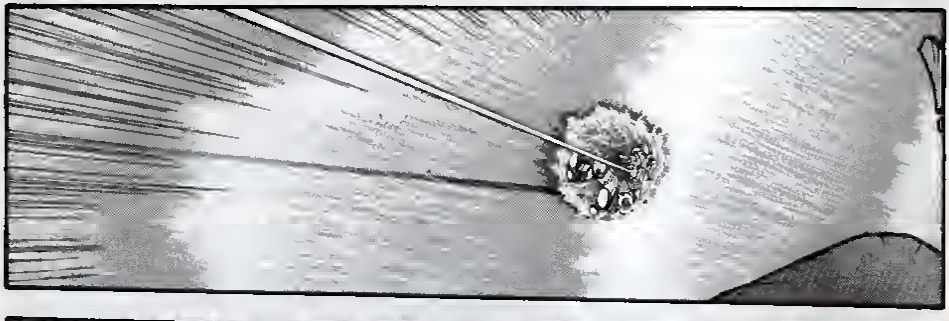


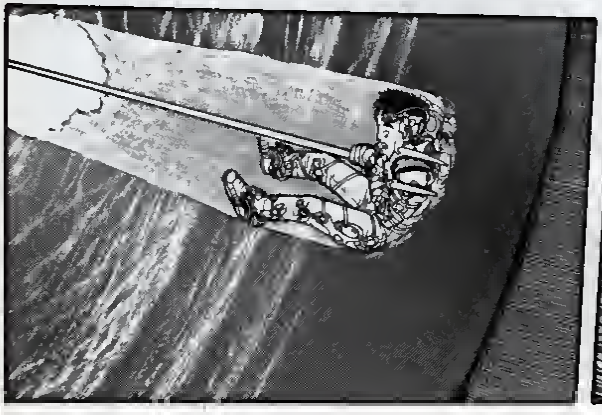

HEY, WHA--?! WAIT A SEC!
HEY, YOU!! GIVE ME A WEAPON, TOO!
THAT THING HE'S USING APPEARED WHEN I WISHED FOR IT, RIGHT?!

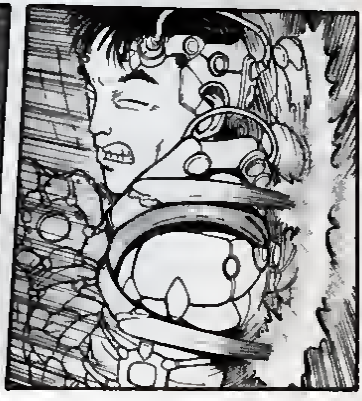

NO NEED FOR MORE.
HNNG!

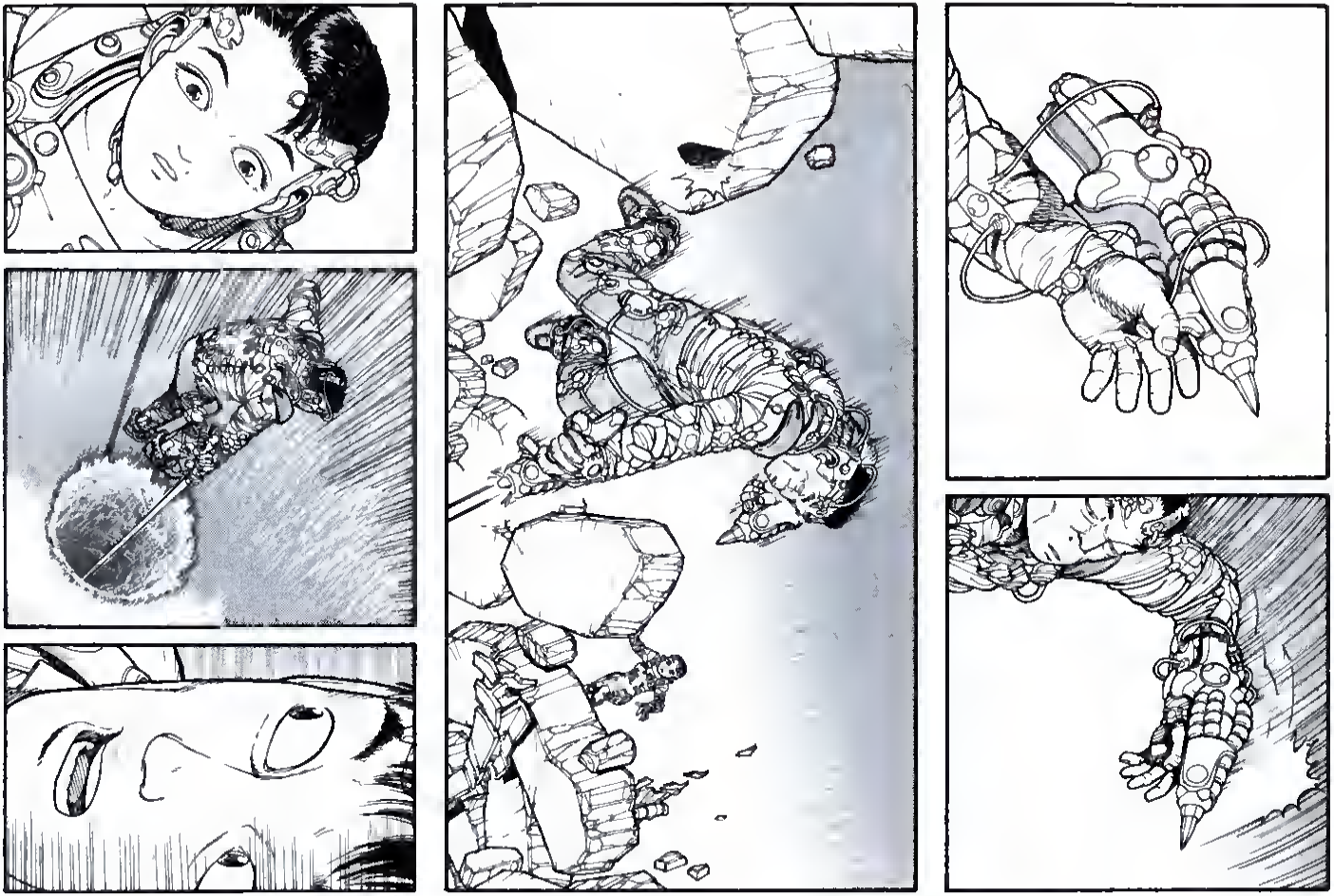

NOTICE: MY REPLICATION UNIT HAS BEEN DESTROYED.
HUH?
AGH!

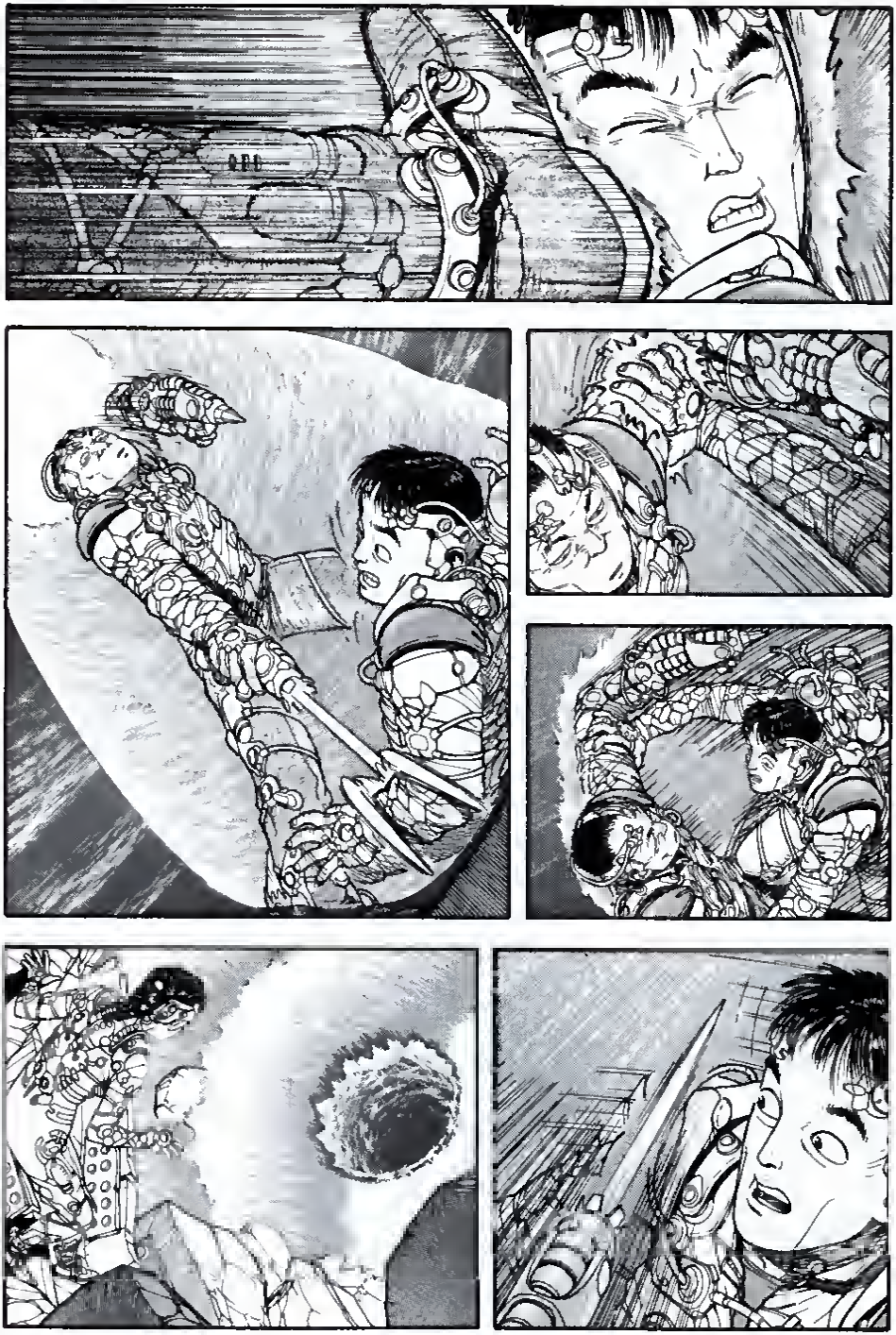


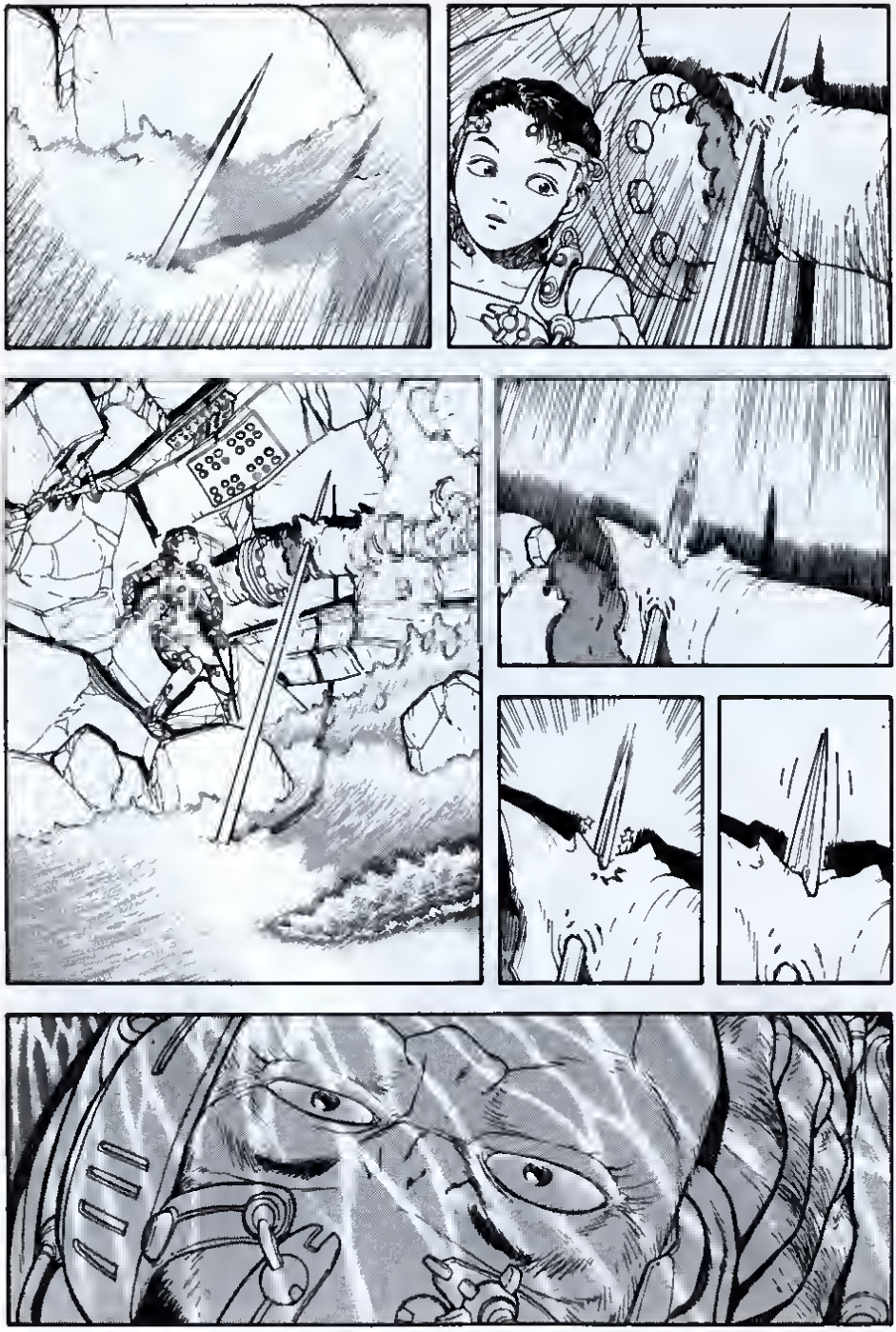


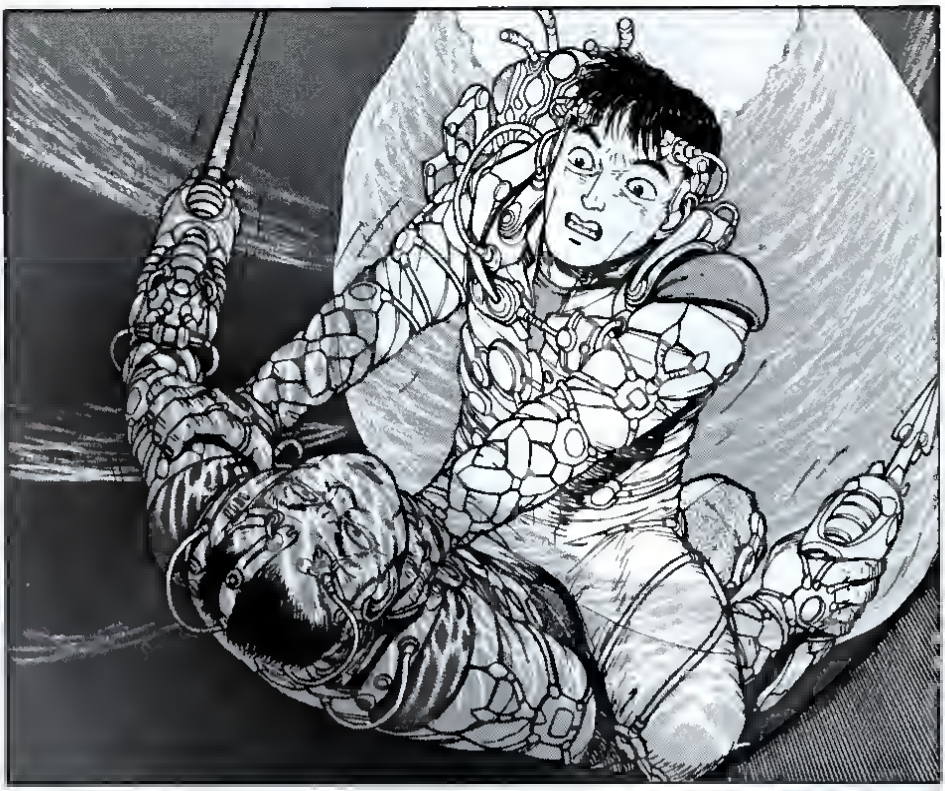




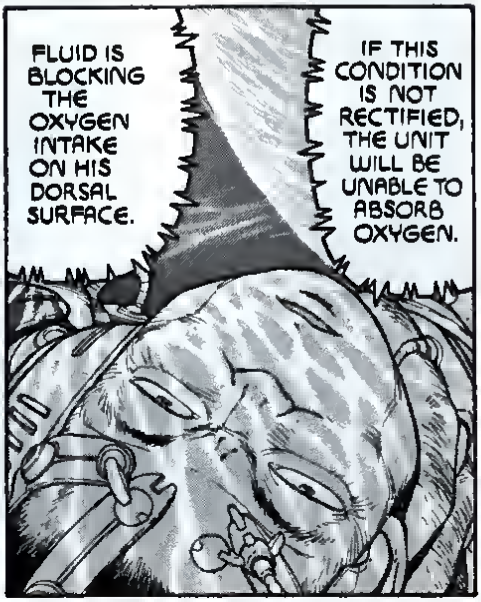


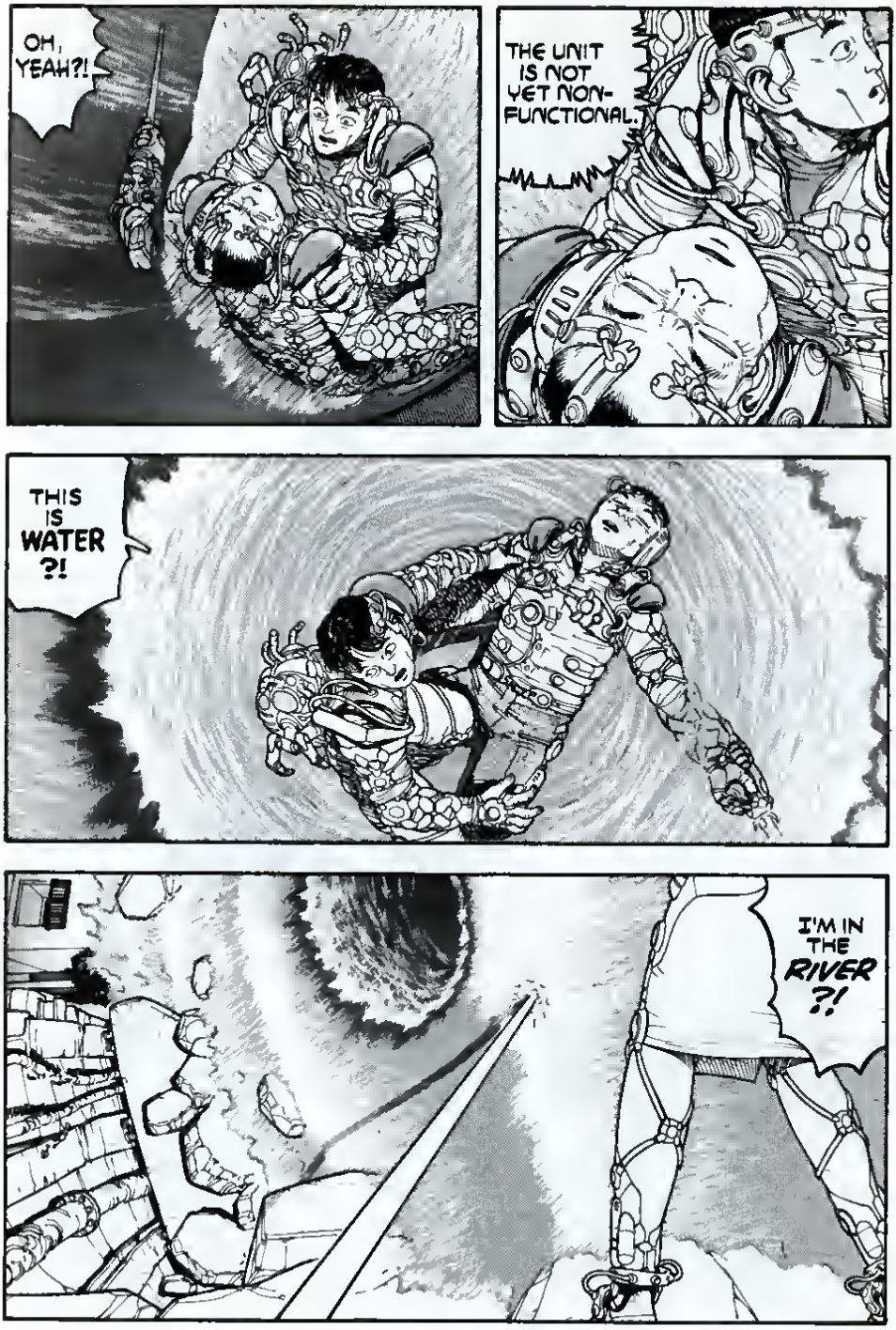


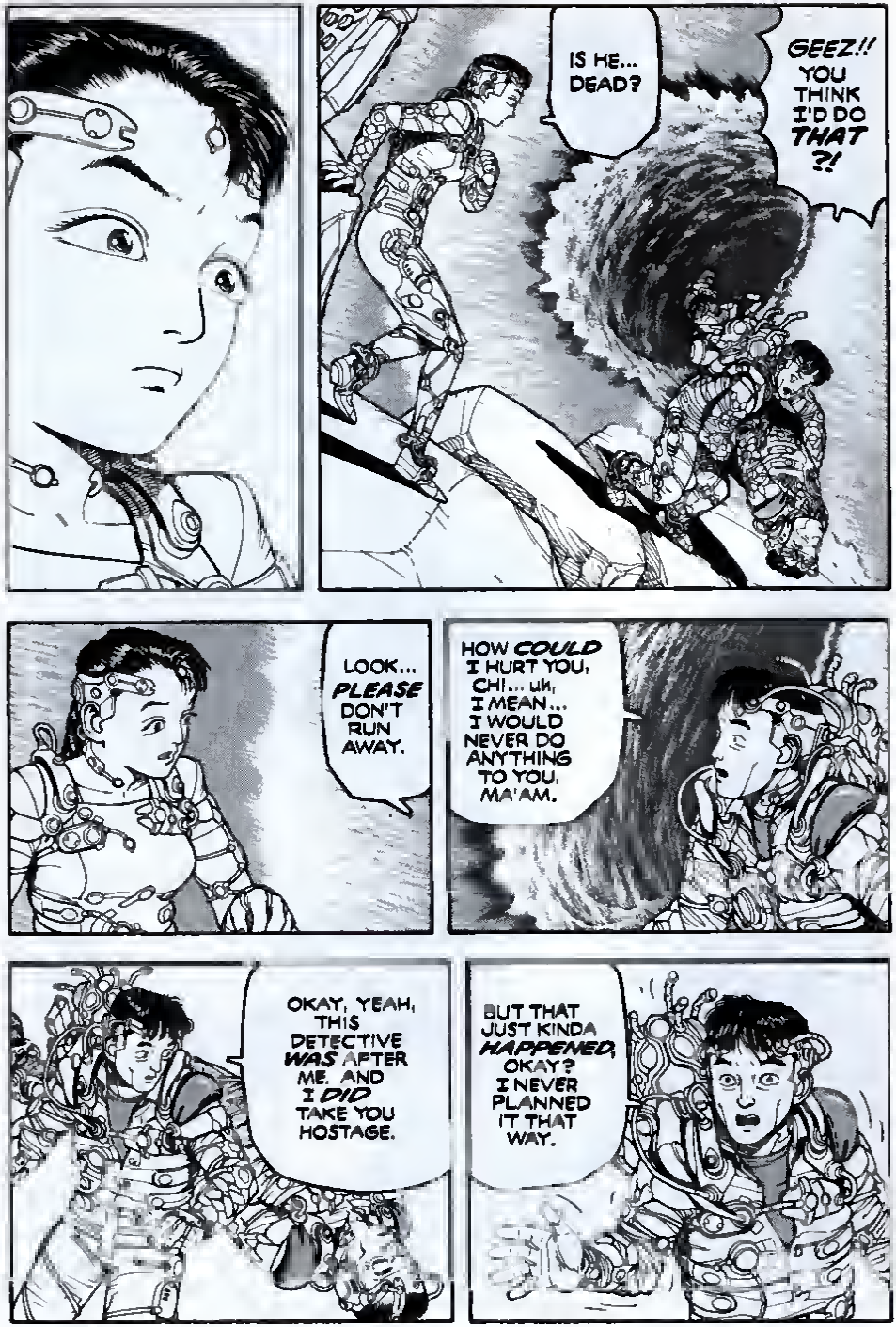


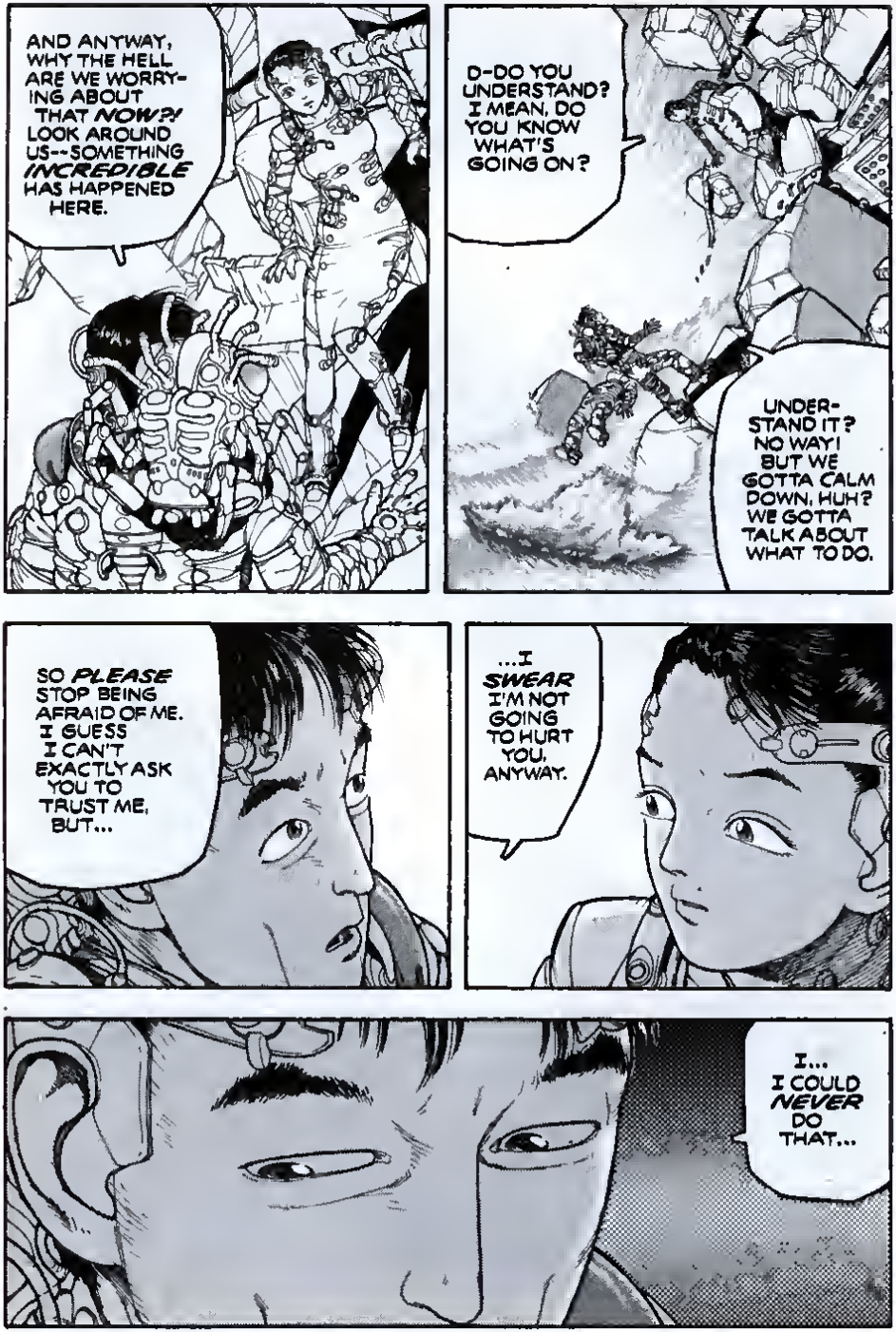


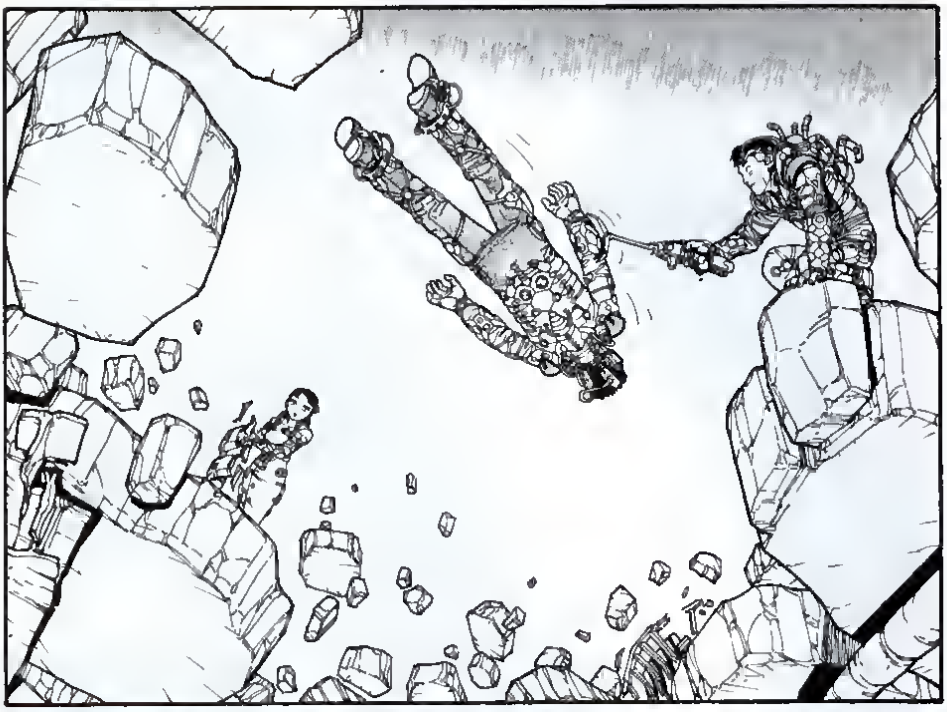
DO YOU WISH TO STOP THE RESPIRATION CYCLE OF THE OTHER UNIT?
HUH?! UH, NO! I WAS JUST--

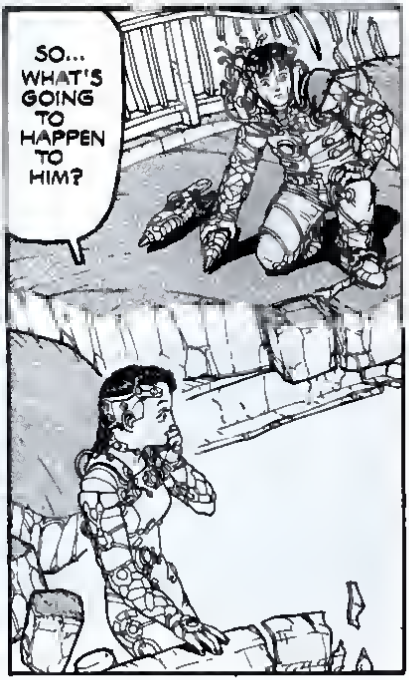

FLUID IS BLOCKING THE OXYGEN INTAKE ON HIS DORSAL SURFACE.
IF THIS CONDITION IS NOT RECTIFIED, THE UNIT WILL BE UNABLE TO ABSORB OXYGEN.


OH, YEAH?!
THE UNIT IS NOT YET NON-FUNCTIONAL.
THIS IS WATER ?!
I'M IN THE RIVER ?!

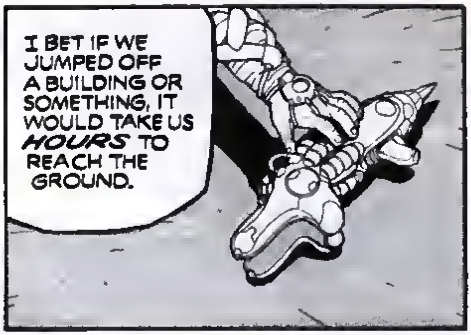

IS HE... DEAD?
GEEZ!! YOU THINK I'D DO THAT ?!
LOOK... PLEASE DON'T RUN AWAY.
HOW COULD I HURT YOU, CH!... uh, I MEAN... I WOULD NEVER DO ANYTHING TO YOU, MA'AM.
OKAY, YEAH, THIS DETECTIVE WAS AFTER ME. AND I DID TAKE YOU HOSTAGE.
BUT THAT JUST KINDA HAPPENED, OKAY? I NEVER PLANNED IT THAT WAY.

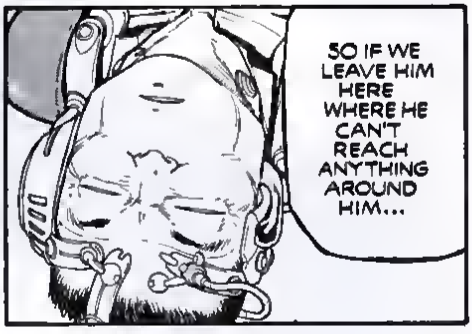

AND ANYWAY, WHY THE HELL ARE WE WORRYING ABOUT THAT *NOW?!* LOOK AROUND US--SOMETHING *INCREDIBLE* HAS HAPPENED HERE.
D-DO YOU UNDERSTAND? I MEAN, DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
UNDERSTAND IT? NO WAY! BUT WE GOTTA CALM DOWN, HUH? WE GOTTA TALK ABOUT WHAT TO DO.
SO *PLEASE* STOP BEING AFRAID OF ME. I GUESS I CAN'T EXACTLY ASK YOU TO TRUST ME, BUT...
...I *SWEAR* I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU, ANYWAY.
I... I COULD *NEVER* DO THAT...

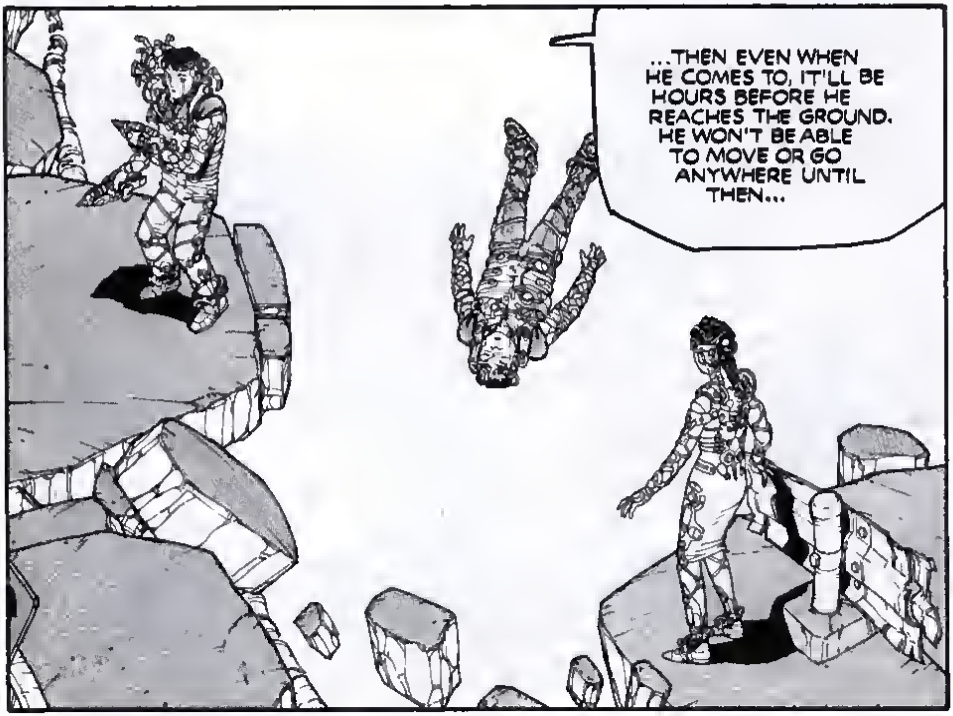


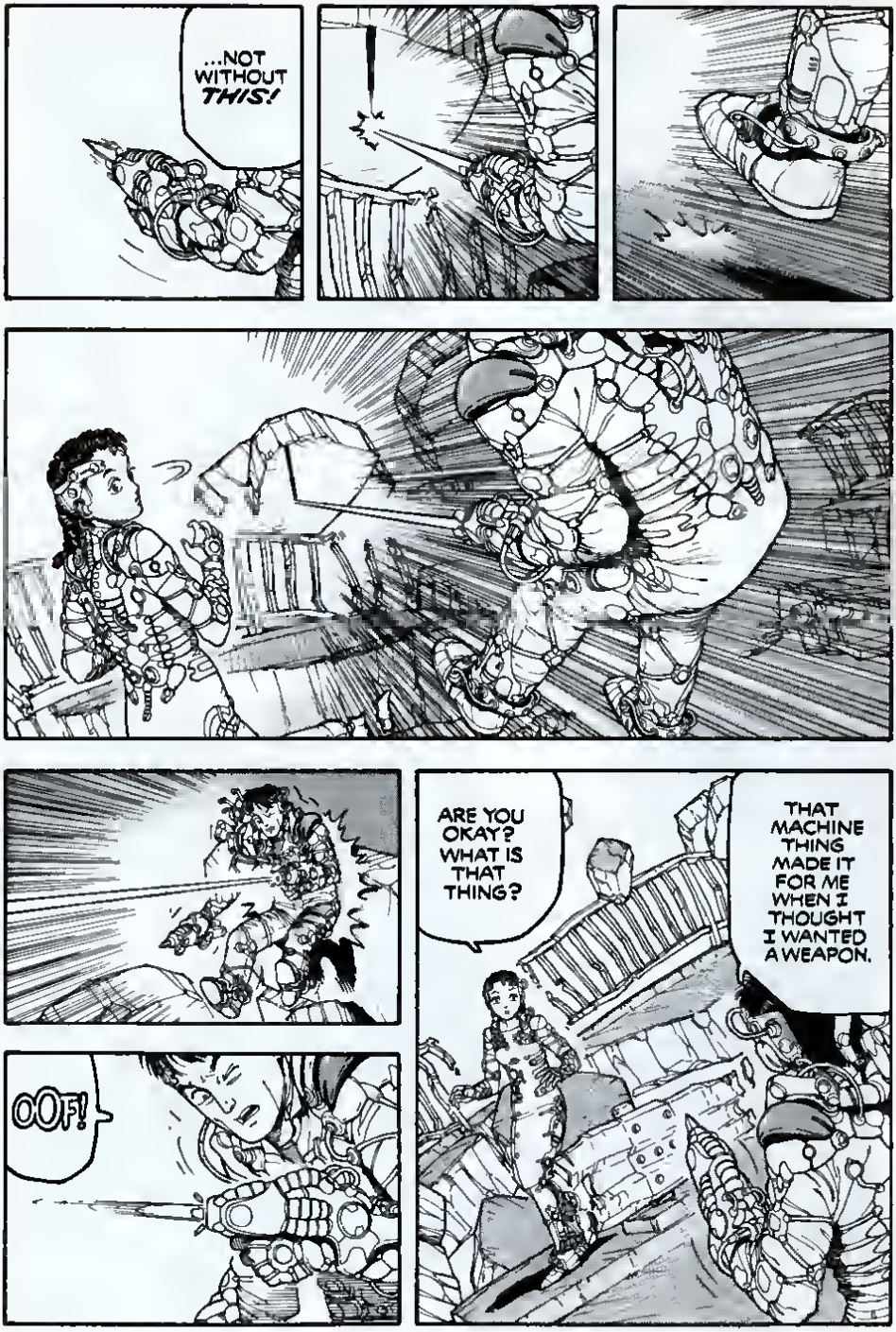

SO... WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO HIM?

LIKE I SAID, IF WE'RE MOVING A HUNDRED-THOUSAND TIMES AS FAST AS THE WORLD AROUND US, A SECOND OF EARTH TIME'LL FEEL LIKE ALMOST A WHOLE DAY TO US.

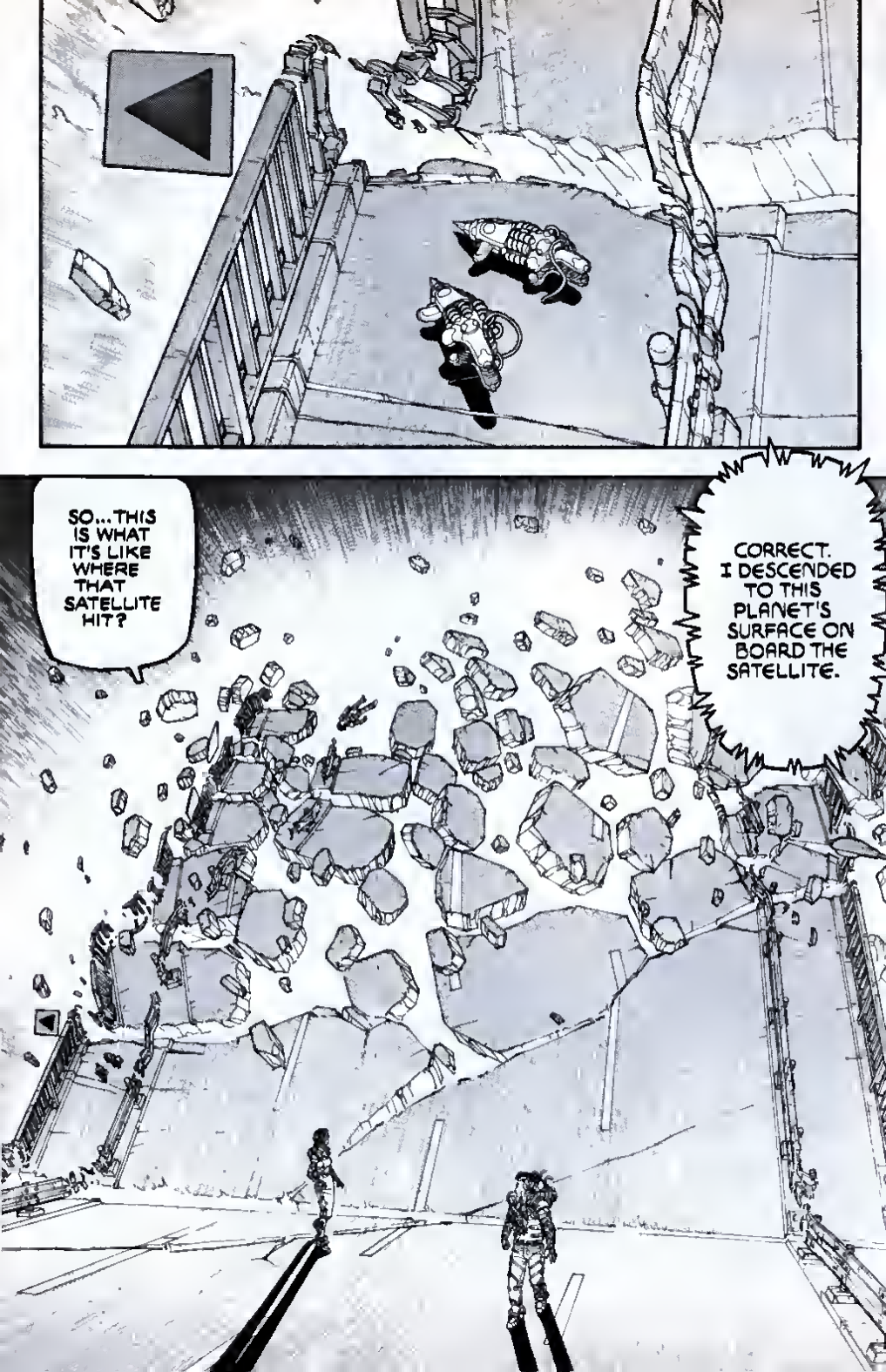

I BET IF WE JUMPED OFF A BUILDING OR SOMETHING, IT WOULD TAKE US *HOURS* TO REACH THE GROUND.


SO IF WE LEAVE HIM HERE WHERE HE CAN'T REACH ANYTHING AROUND HIM...

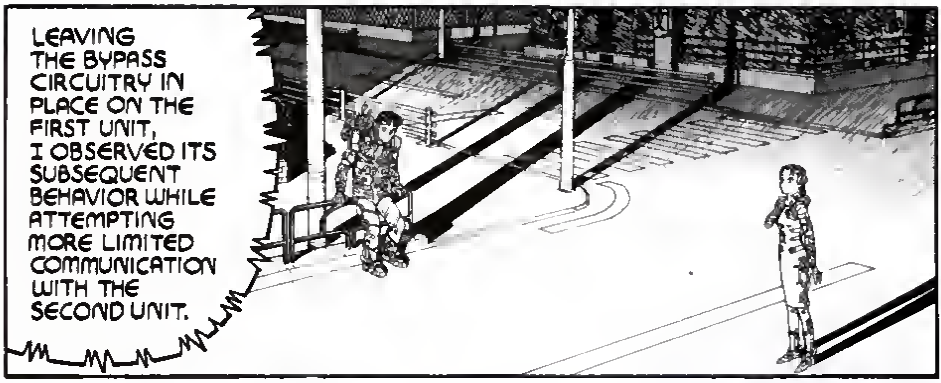

...THEN EVEN WHEN HE COMES TO, IT'LL BE HOURS BEFORE HE REACHES THE GROUND. HE WON'T BE ABLE TO MOVE OR GO ANYWHERE UNTIL THEN...

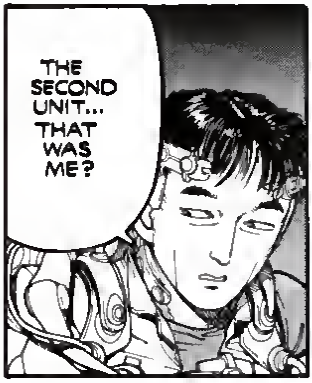

...NOT WITHOUT THIS!
OOF!
ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT IS THAT THING?
THAT MACHINE THING MADE IT FOR ME WHEN I THOUGHT I WANTED A WEAPON.

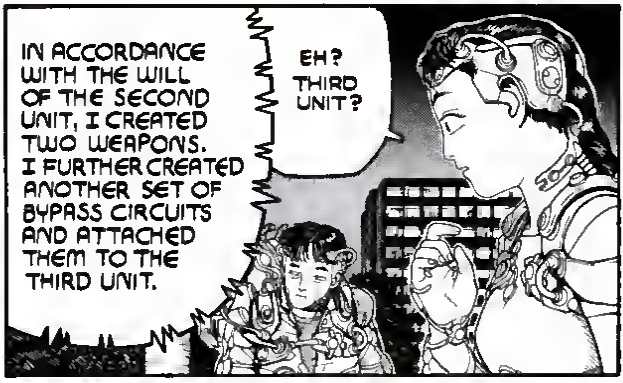
RIGHT?
THAT IS CORRECT.
WHA--?!
WHO SAID THAT?!
IT'S THIS THING ON MY BACK. AS BEST AS I CAN TELL, IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MEAN US ANY HARM, ANYWAY.
YOUR BACK...?
?!
I GUESS THERE'S JUST ONE MAIN UNIT.
THAT STUFF ALL OVER YOU AND THE DETECTIVE... HE CALLED IT A "BYPASS CIRCUIT." HE MADE IT FOR YOU, SOMEHOW.
BUT THAT'S ALL I KNOW. HEY, uh, OHZUN... WHY DON'T YOU EXPLAIN IT TO US?
YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH HUMANS, RIGHT?

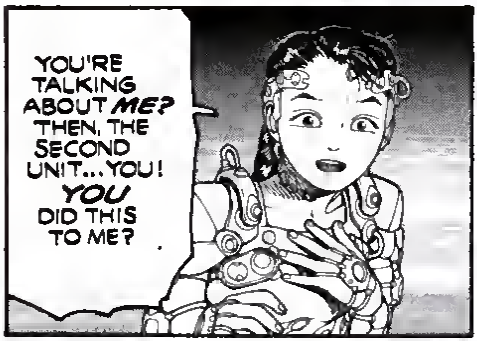

SO...THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE WHERE THAT SATELLITE HIT?
CORRECT. I DESCENDED TO THIS PLANET'S SURFACE ON BOARD THE SATELLITE.

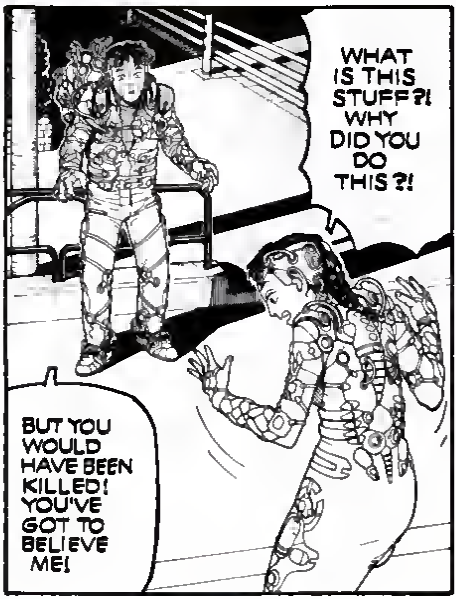
I THEN ATTEMPTED COMMUNICATION WITH THE "HUMAN" UNIT CLOSEST TO THE IMPACT POINT. HOWEVER IT WAS UNABLE TO PROCESS THE DATA I DOWNLOADED DIRECTLY INTO ITS BRAIN. I APPEAR TO HAVE DAMAGED ITS HIGHER BRAIN FUNCTIONS.


LEAVING THE BYPASS CIRCUITRY IN PLACE ON THE FIRST UNIT, I OBSERVED ITS SUBSEQUENT BEHAVIOR WHILE ATTEMPTING MORE LIMITED COMMUNICATION WITH THE SECOND UNIT.

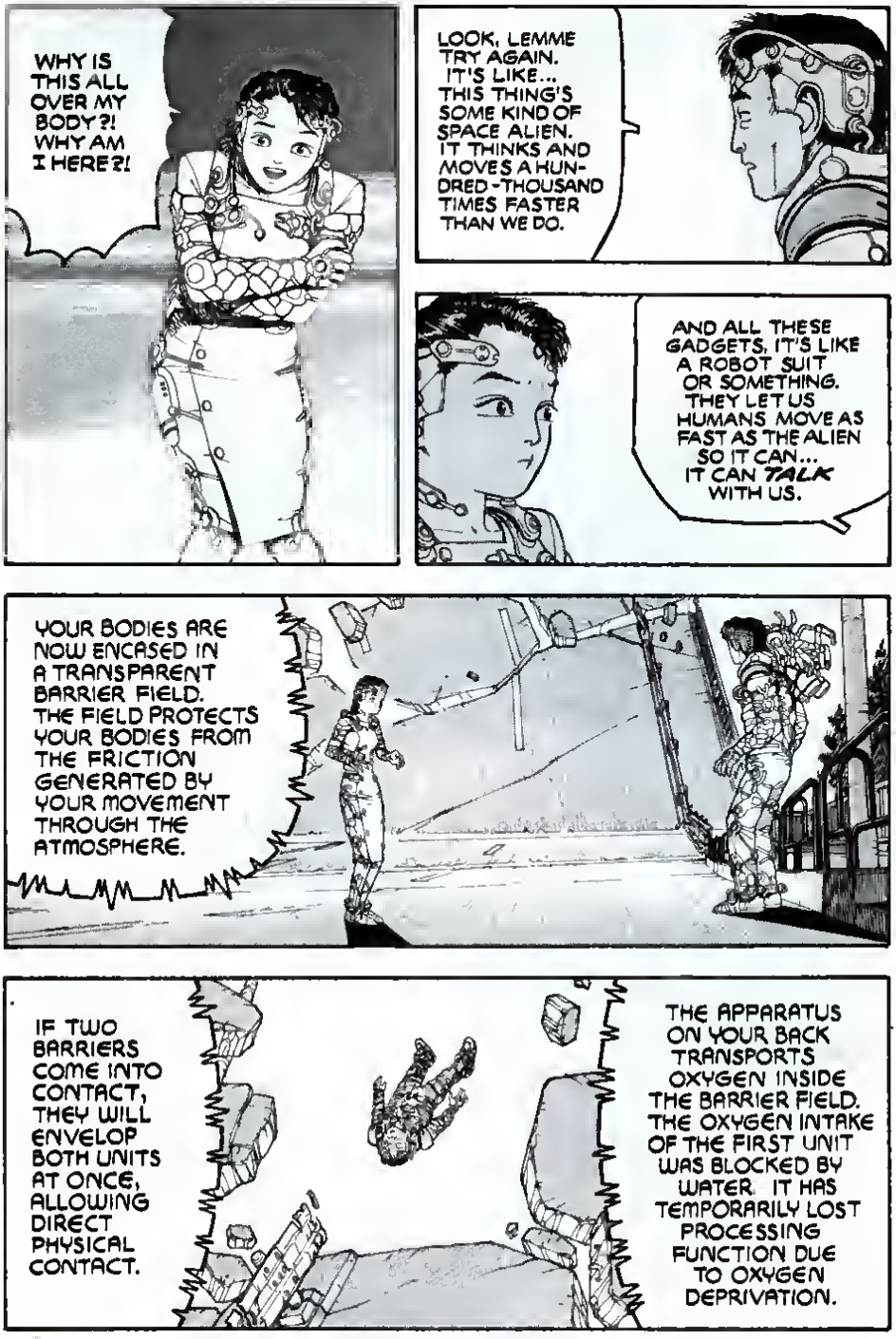

THE SECOND UNIT... THAT WAS ME?

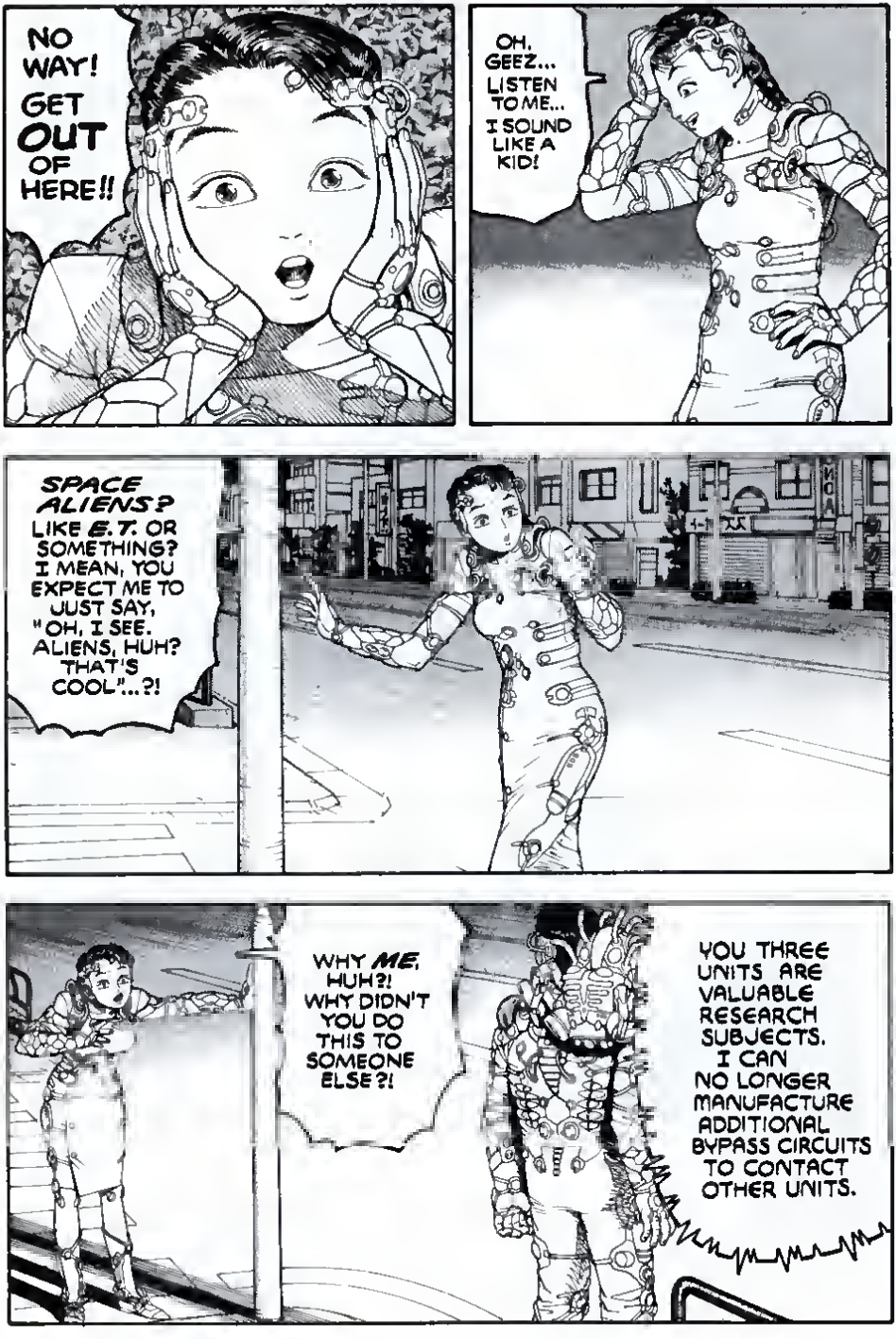

EH? THIRD UNIT?
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WILL OF THE SECOND UNIT, I CREATED TWO WEAPONS. I FURTHER CREATED ANOTHER SET OF BYPASS CIRCUITS AND ATTACHED THEM TO THE THIRD UNIT.

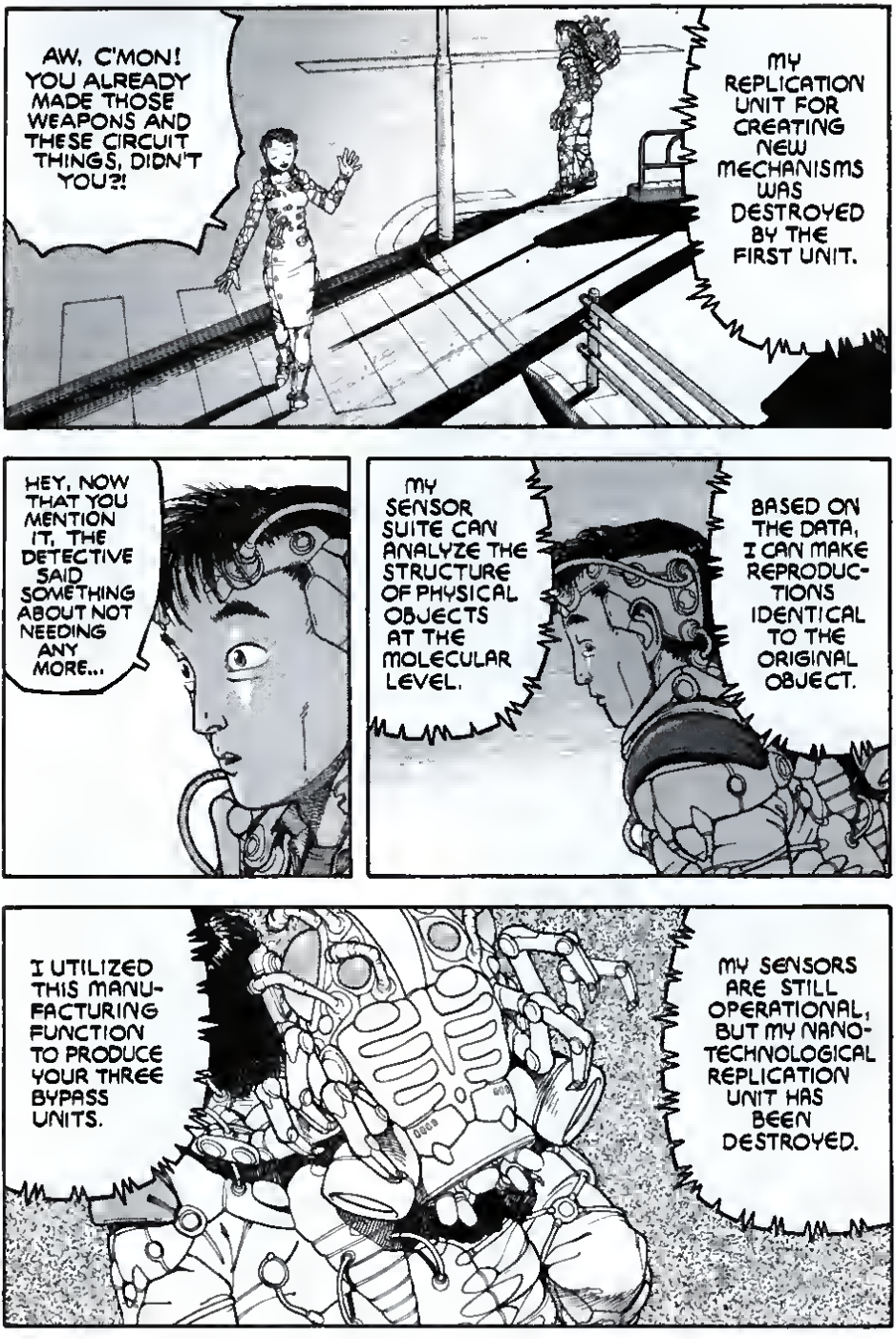

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT *ME?* THEN, THE SECOND UNIT... YOU! *YOU* DID THIS TO ME?

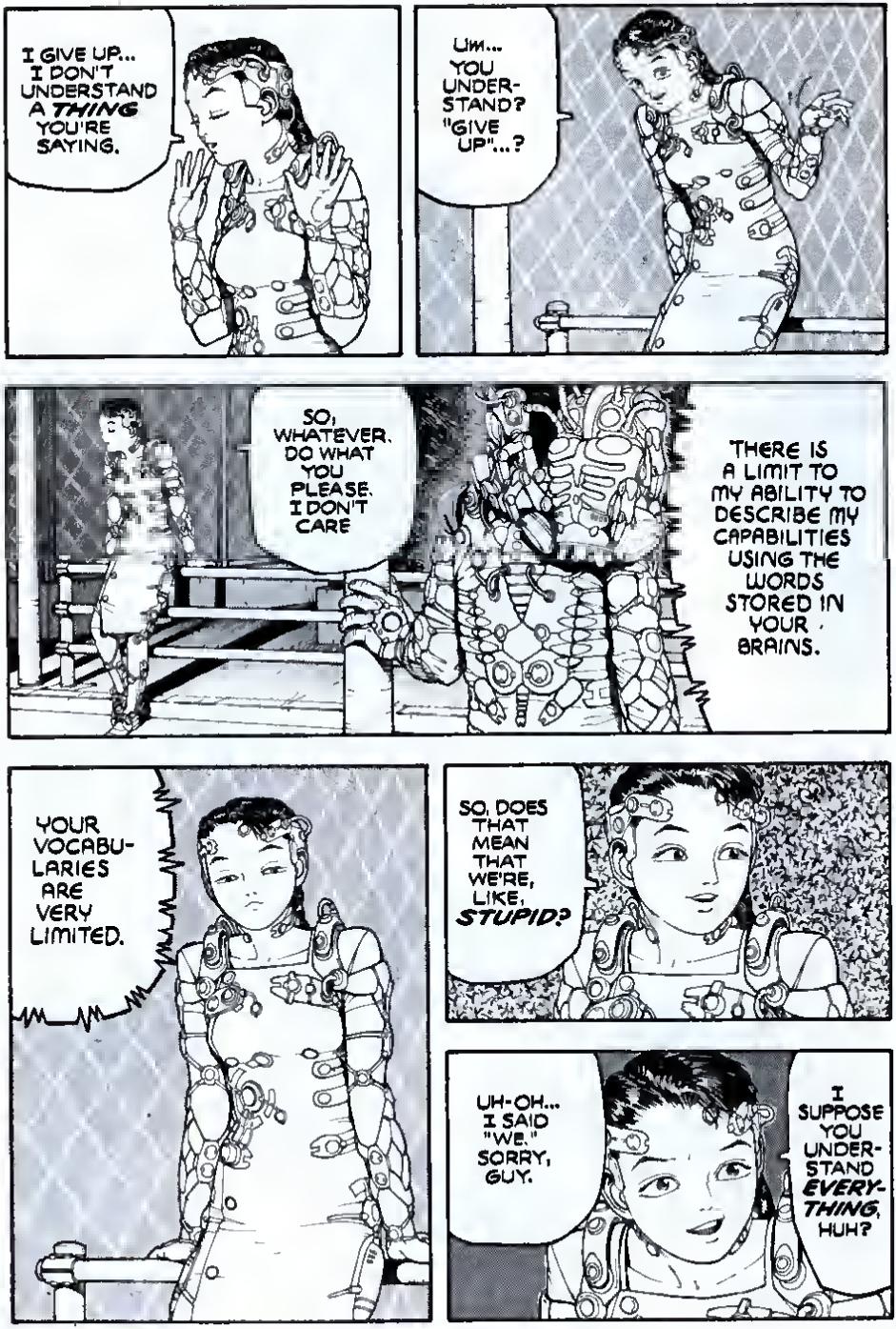

WHAT IS THIS STUFF?! WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!
BUT YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED! YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE ME!

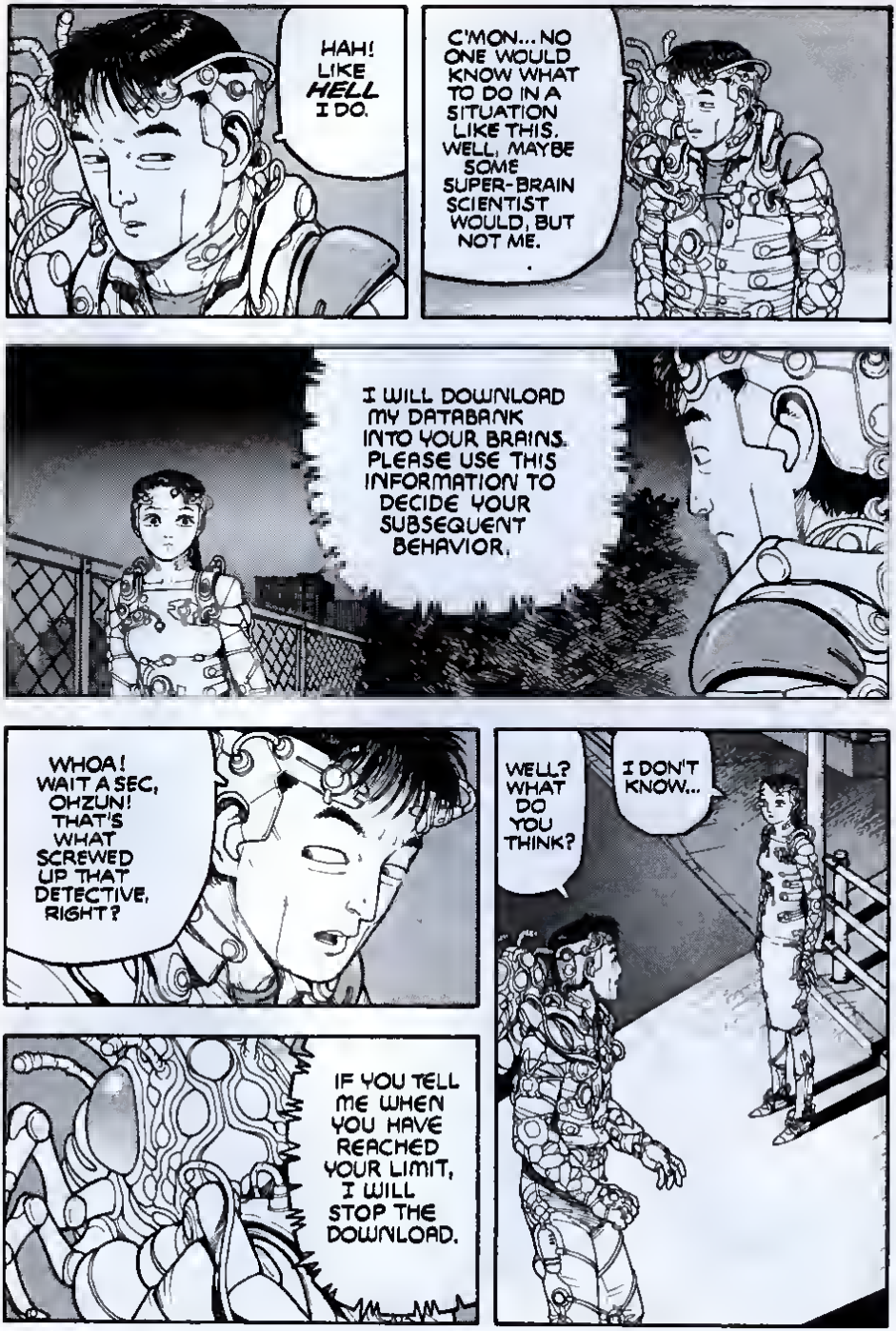
I... B-BUT IF I *DIDN'T* DO IT YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN--

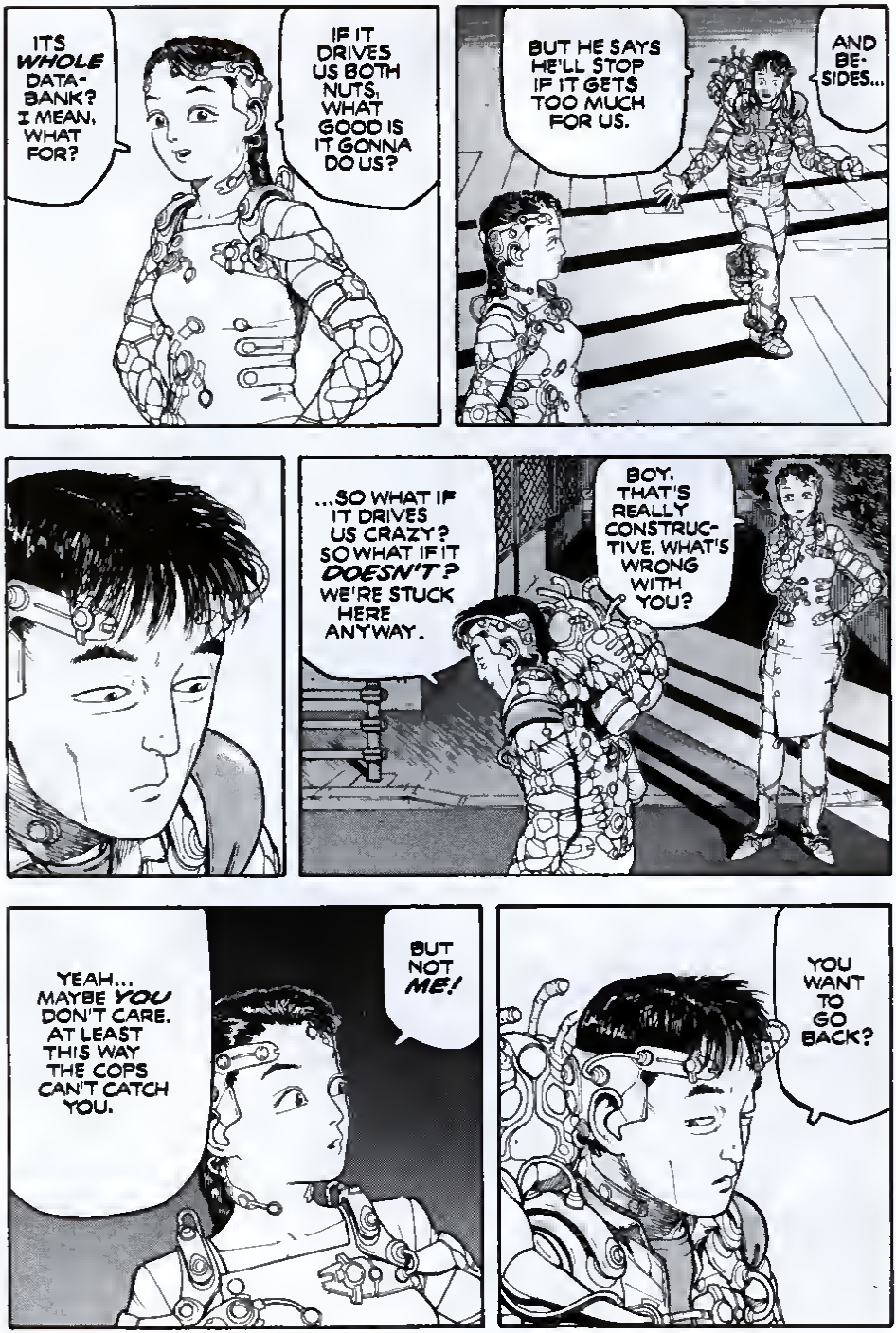

WHY IS THIS ALL OVER MY BODY?! WHY AM I HERE?!
LOOK, LEMME TRY AGAIN. IT'S LIKE... THIS THING'S SOME KIND OF SPACE ALIEN. IT THINKS AND MOVES A HUNDRED-THOUSAND TIMES FASTER THAN WE DO.
AND ALL THESE GADGETS, IT'S LIKE A ROBOT SUIT OR SOMETHING. THEY LET US HUMANS MOVE AS FAST AS THE ALIEN SO IT CAN... IT CAN TALK WITH US.
YOUR BODIES ARE NOW ENCASED IN A TRANSPARENT BARRIER FIELD. THE FIELD PROTECTS YOUR BODIES FROM THE FRICTION GENERATED BY YOUR MOVEMENT THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE.
IF TWO BARRIERS COME INTO CONTACT, THEY WILL ENVELOP BOTH UNITS AT ONCE, ALLOWING DIRECT PHYSICAL CONTACT.
THE APPARATUS ON YOUR BACK TRANSPORTS OXYGEN INSIDE THE BARRIER FIELD. THE OXYGEN INTAKE OF THE FIRST UNIT WAS BLOCKED BY WATER. IT HAS TEMPORARILY LOST PROCESSING FUNCTION DUE TO OXYGEN DEPRIVATION.

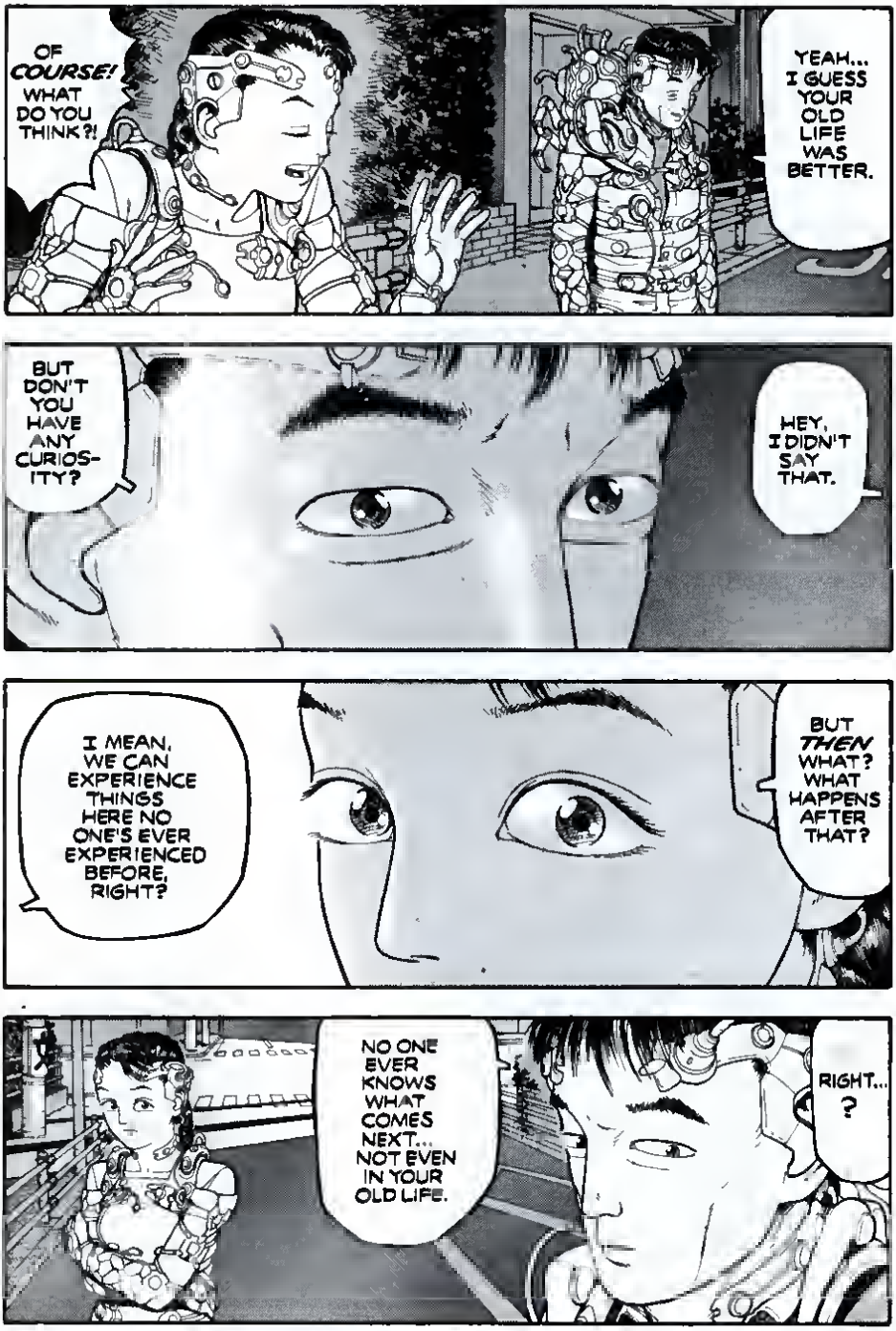

NO WAY! GET OUT OF HERE!!
OH, GEEZ... LISTEN TO ME... I SOUND LIKE A KID!
SPACE ALIENS? LIKE E.T. OR SOMETHING? I MEAN, YOU EXPECT ME TO JUST SAY, "OH, I SEE. ALIENS, HUH? THAT'S COOL"...?!
WHY ME, HUH?! WHY DIDN'T YOU DO THIS TO SOMEONE ELSE?!
YOU THREE UNITS ARE VALUABLE RESEARCH SUBJECTS. I CAN NO LONGER MANUFACTURE ADDITIONAL BYPASS CIRCUITS TO CONTACT OTHER UNITS.

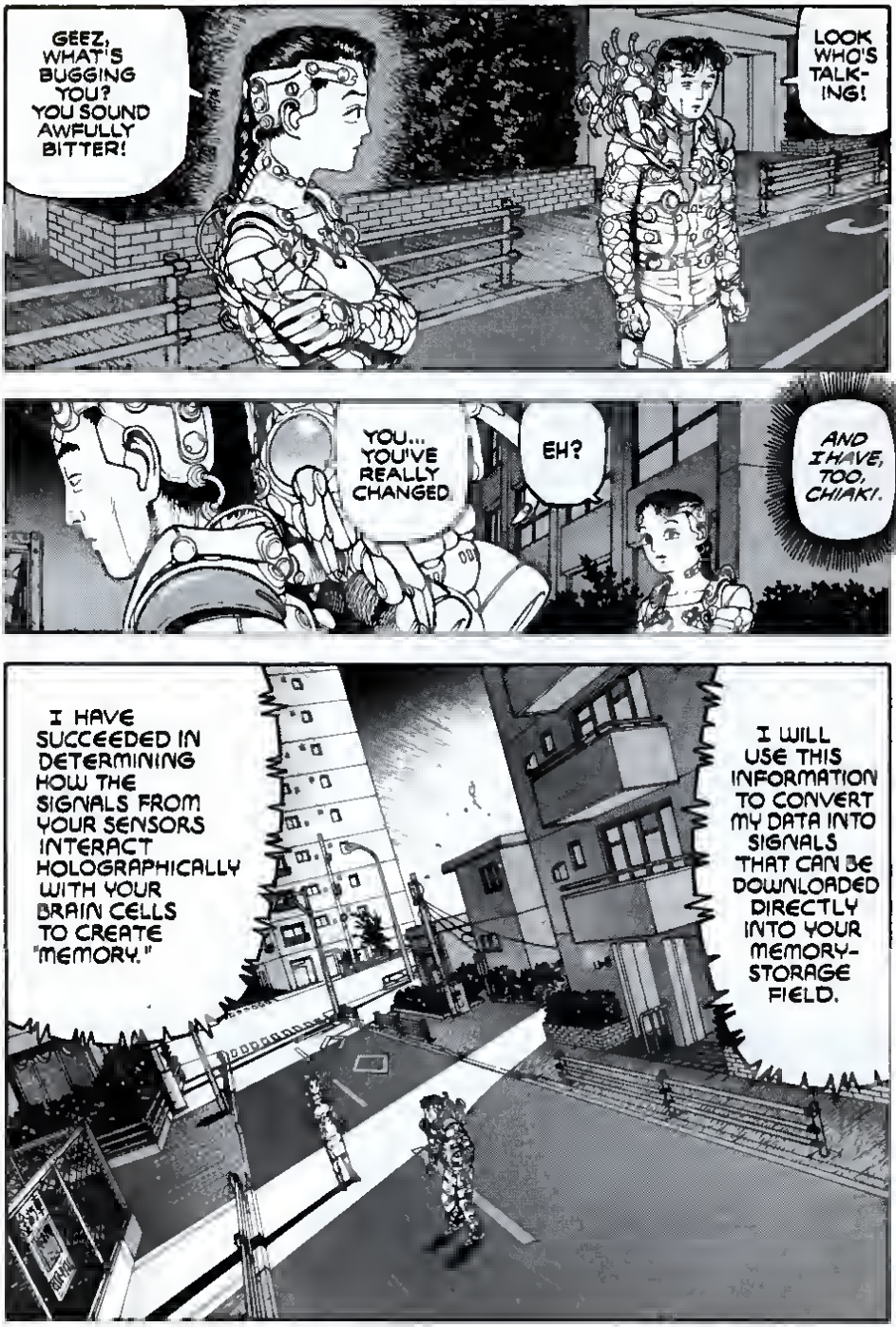

AW, C'MON! YOU ALREADY MADE THOSE WEAPONS AND THESE CIRCUIT THINGS, DIDN'T YOU?!
MY REPLICATION UNIT FOR CREATING NEW MECHANISMS WAS DESTROYED BY THE FIRST UNIT.
HEY, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THE DETECTIVE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT NOT NEEDING ANY MORE...
MY SENSOR SUITE CAN ANALYZE THE STRUCTURE OF PHYSICAL OBJECTS AT THE MOLECULAR LEVEL.
BASED ON THE DATA, I CAN MAKE REPRODUC-TIONS IDENTICAL TO THE ORIGINAL OBJECT.
I UTILIZED THIS MANU-FACTURING FUNCTION TO PRODUCE YOUR THREE BYPASS UNITS.
MY SENSORS ARE STILL OPERATIONAL, BUT MY NANO-TECHNOLOGICAL REPLICATION UNIT HAS BEEN DESTROYED.

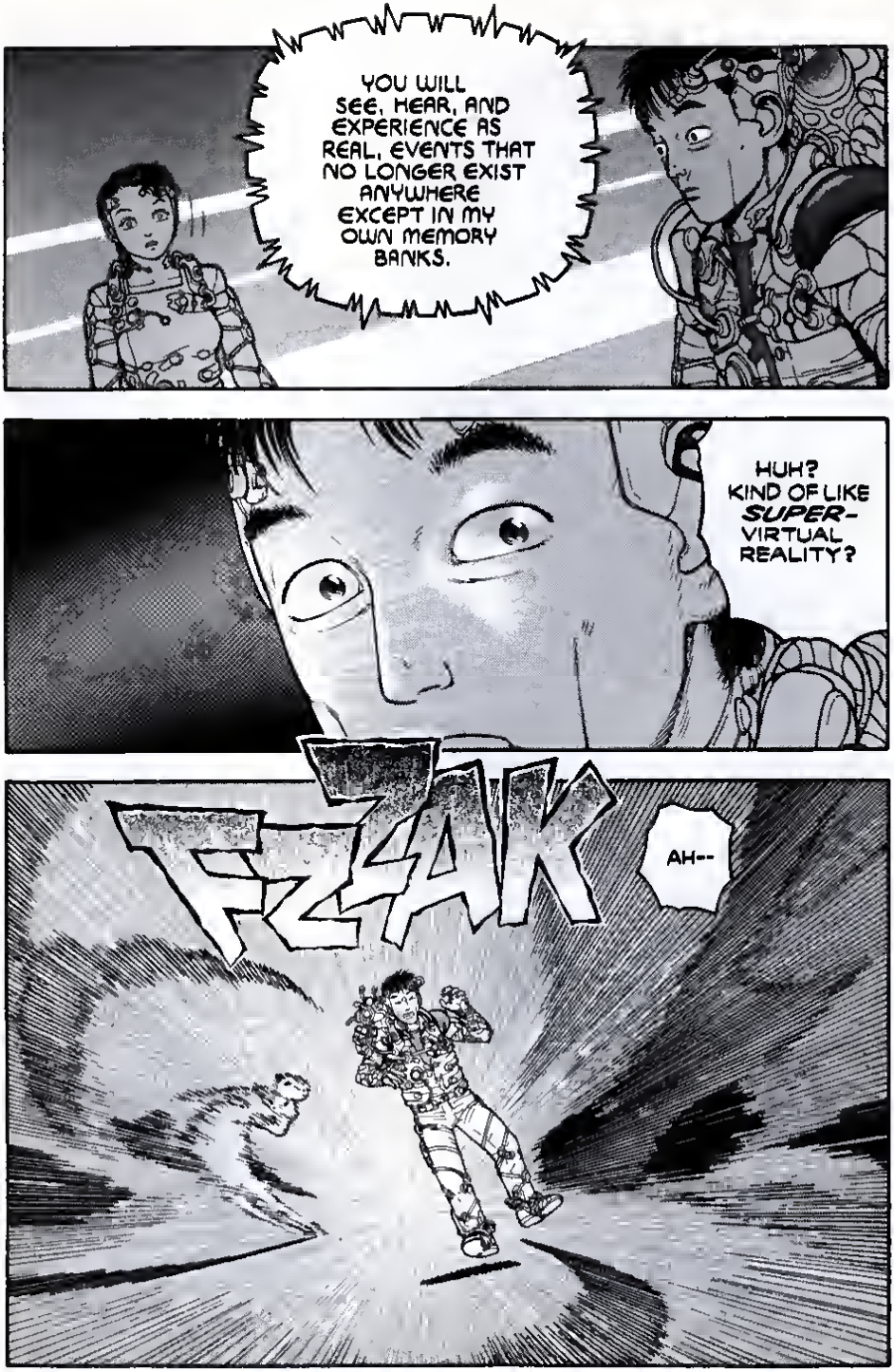

I GIVE UP... I DON'T UNDERSTAND A THING YOU'RE SAYING.
UM... YOU UNDER-STAND? "GIVE UP"...?
SO, WHATEVER. DO WHAT YOU PLEASE. I DON'T CARE
THERE IS A LIMIT TO MY ABILITY TO DESCRIBE MY CAPABILITIES USING THE WORDS STORED IN YOUR BRAINS.
YOUR VOCABU-LARIES ARE VERY LIMITED.
SO, DOES THAT MEAN THAT WE'RE, LIKE, STUPID?
UH-OH... I SAID "WE." SORRY, GUY.
I SUPPOSE YOU UNDER-STAND EVERY-THING, HUH?


HAH! LIKE HELL I DO.
C'MON... NO ONE WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS. WELL, MAYBE SOME SUPER-BRAIN SCIENTIST WOULD, BUT NOT ME.
I WILL DOWNLOAD MY DATABANK INTO YOUR BRAINS. PLEASE USE THIS INFORMATION TO DECIDE YOUR SUBSEQUENT BEHAVIOR.
WHOA! WAIT A SEC, OHZUN! THAT'S WHAT SCREWED UP THAT DETECTIVE, RIGHT?
WELL? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I DON'T KNOW...
IF YOU TELL ME WHEN YOU HAVE REACHED YOUR LIMIT, I WILL STOP THE DOWNLOAD.


ITS WHOLE DATA-BANK? I MEAN, WHAT FOR?
IF IT DRIVES US BOTH NUTS, WHAT GOOD IS IT GONNA DO US?
BUT HE SAYS HE'LL STOP IF IT GETS TOO MUCH FOR US.
AND BE-SIDES...
...SO WHAT IF IT DRIVES US CRAZY? SO WHAT IF IT DOESN'T? WE'RE STUCK HERE ANYWAY.
BOY, THAT'S REALLY CONSTRUC-TIVE. WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
YEAH... MAYBE YOU DON'T CARE. AT LEAST THIS WAY THE COPS CAN'T CATCH YOU.
BUT NOT ME!
YOU WANT TO GO BACK?


OF COURSE! WHAT DO YOU THINK?!
YEAH... I GUESS YOUR OLD LIFE WAS BETTER.
BUT DON'T YOU HAVE ANY CURIOS-ITY?
HEY, I DIDN'T SAY THAT.
I MEAN, WE CAN EXPERIENCE THINGS HERE NO ONE'S EVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE, RIGHT?
BUT THEN WHAT? WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT?
NO ONE EVER KNOWS WHAT COMES NEXT... NOT EVEN IN YOUR OLD LIFE.
RIGHT...?


GEEZ, WHAT'S BUGGING YOU? YOU SOUND AWFULLY BITTER!
LOOK WHO'S TALK-ING!
YOU... YOU'VE REALLY CHANGED.
EH?
AND I HAVE, TOO, CHIAKI.
I HAVE SUCCEEDED IN DETERMINING HOW THE SIGNALS FROM YOUR SENSORS INTERACT HOLOGRAPHICALLY WITH YOUR BRAIN CELLS TO CREATE "MEMORY."
I WILL USE THIS INFORMATION TO CONVERT MY DATA INTO SIGNALS THAT CAN BE DOWNLOADED DIRECTLY INTO YOUR MEMORY-STORAGE FIELD.


YOU WILL SEE, HEAR, AND EXPERIENCE AS REAL, EVENTS THAT NO LONGER EXIST ANYWHERE EXCEPT IN MY OWN MEMORY BANKS.
HUH? KIND OF LIKE SUPER- VIRTUAL REALITY?
FZZAK
AH--

TO BE CONTINUED!